

Juanita Feros Ruys, John O. Ward, and Melanie Heyworth, eds. *The Classics in the Medieval and Renaissance Classroom: The Role of Ancient Texts in the Arts Curriculum as Revealed by Surviving Manuscripts and Early Printed Books*.

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For the period covered in this volume, from the late tenth to the sixteenth century, the fortunes of the classics — the works of poetry and prose from Greek and Latin antiquity — were tied to the fortunes of Latin language instruction. So to appreciate how and why ancient texts were read in premodern times, one must attempt an imagination of the classroom and its practices. Written by experts in the history of rhetoric and the history of education (the volume stems from a 2006 Sydney conference with a slightly different title), the seventeen essays collected here eschew the testimonies of programmatic statements, narratives, and ideals, and delve into the far more variable evidence of textbooks, commentaries, glosses, *accessus* (formal introductions), *reportationes* (dictations of lectures), paraphrases, abstracts, and commonplace books.

Given the book's title, it is surprising that only six essays concern the teaching of particular ancient texts (and four of these concern the teaching of ancient textbooks by Aristotle, Cicero, Hermogenes, and Priscian). Most of the essays concern specific components of a liberal arts curriculum within which the ancient texts were studied, and so treat the classics indirectly. Despite this limitation, the studies are rich with implications for the reception of the classics. Reconstructing actual classroom practice from material evidence is an ongoing and contested project. These essays, arranged chronologically, reflect several productive approaches. For reasons of space, I shall highlight those that draw their conclusions most directly from the above-listed records.

Some of the authors discover significant patterns in a group of manuscripts. Martin Camargo's census of thirty-four English manuscripts of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova* reveals that this popular treatise on verse and prose composition enjoyed two phases of influence in medieval England. By comparing ancient and medieval works collected with the *Poetria Nova* in manuscripts from these two phases, Camargo describes the second phase as a revival of the school text for use at a higher level of instruction. Similarly, drawing on an extensive survey of Florentine educational manuscripts from ca. 1200 to ca. 1500, and reviewing common practices of annotation, Robert Black describes the increasing use of the vernacular to teach Latin. He argues that this, and not the humanist practice of quoting classical authors, constitutes the real revolution in grammar instruction in premodern Italy.

Other essays describe modifications of school texts as evidence of classroom practice. In a study of educational manuscripts from England ca. 950–1130, Gabriele Knappe deftly modulates the historical testimony of school texts by turning attention from content to form, including layout and presentation of texts. Paraphrase, excerpt, and gloss in these manuscripts are intimations of a lively and evolving practice. Craig Kallendorf takes a similar approach in his study of

a sixteenth-century printed commonplace book of exemplary passages from the *Aeneid*. Comparing this text with other contemporary testimonies in print and manuscript, Kallendorf helpfully reconstructs the reading practices that shaped the commonplace book, a learning aid that has been of recent interest.

In two essays, ancient textbooks and their reception prove invaluable in reconstructing later classroom practice. Reviewing the manuscript evidence of Priscian's *Praeexercitamenta* (*Preliminary Exercises*), Manfred Kraus differentiates the well-attested practice of written exercises in medieval schools from the ancient sequence of *progymnasmata*. Lola Sharon Davidson, in a departure from the volume's general focus on grammar and rhetoric, conjures from the manuscript fortunes of *De sompno* (the title given to three short treatises by Aristotle on dreams and sleep) a fascinating drama of the university science curriculum of the thirteenth century.

Other essays, although they do not address classroom practice directly, enrich the volume by exploring some of the ideas that might have animated Latin pedagogy at its best. Rita Copeland follows Thierry of Chartres, in his commentary on Cicero's *De inventione*, on a passionate philosophical inquiry into the causes of eloquence. Lucia Calboli Montefusco expertly describes George of Trebizond's ambitious fusion of Hermogenean and Ciceronian types of style in an early letter, and gestures toward the fascinating implications of George's theory for *imitatio* in the Renaissance.

Given some familiarity with the outlines, objectives, and fortunes of the liberal arts, any student of medieval and Renaissance education will find much in this volume to consider and admire.

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