

Paul Botley. *Learning Greek in Western Europe, 1396–1529. Grammars, Lexica, and Classroom Texts.*

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Textbooks may be the bane of students, but they are also the stuff of cultural history, and sometimes very high-level cultural history. I recall, for example, Paul Oskar Kristeller remarking that, because of his medieval popularity, one could view Aristotle as the greatest textbook writer ever. To the uninitiated the title of Paul Botley's new book might seem to promise an exercise in pedantry, but in point of fact Botley has produced a brilliantly exciting work of scholarship that goes a long way in illuminating one of the most important new developments of the Renaissance, the introduction of Greek into the curriculum. This book will undoubtedly become a staple text in the study of Renaissance humanism. Far from being a mere cataloguer of old textbooks, Botley has given us an amazingly rich cultural history through the detailed study of the motives, timing, and *fortuna* of Greek school texts in the West from the late fourteenth century through the first third of the sixteenth century. I myself learned a great deal from his narrative and notes (one is tempted to say, *quot sententiae, tot notae*, so dense and apt is his documentation).

The book divides into four parts. Chapter 1 covers Greek grammars from that of Manuel Calecas in the 1390s to that of Johann Metzler in 1529, with a great number of important and not so important authors in between, such as Manuel Chrysoloras, Matthew Camariotes, Theodore Gaza, Ottomar Nachtgall, and Philip Melanchthon. Botley's *terminus post quem* spontaneously establishes itself from the subject under discussion. He ends in 1529 because "First, the year 1530 saw the publication of Nicolas Clénard's *Institutiones in linguam graecam* and 1531 that of his *Méditationes*. Clénard's work came to dominate Greek teaching in Catholic Europe for the rest of the century. . . . Second, Guillaume Budé's *Commentarii linguae graecae* emerged in 1529, a work that put Greek lexicography on a new foundation" (xii–xiii). Be that as it may, I actually regretted that the book came to an end here because of the insights and information it had consistently provided up to that point. The frequent collation of disparate bits of information and the no less frequent citation of sources and texts one would not expect to be relevant for the subject confirms what is suggested by Botley's preface: this book is the product of profound scholarship long in gestation.

Chapter 2 covers Greek lexica. Botley profited from the earlier the work of Peter Thiermann, but his comprehensiveness and masterful development of detail from a wide array of sources is extraordinary. One amusing discovery, based in part on simply reading titlepages with informed awareness, is the publishers' competition that burst out in the printing of dictionaries in the 1510s and 1520s. Chapter 3 treats the exercise texts students were given to read. One would, of course, expect classics such as Homer, Isocrates, Plato, and Xenophon, but the use of various elementary pamphlets and works known today only to specialists, such as Pseudo-Phocylides and Pseudo-Orpheus, is significant for those interested in the classical tradition and the readings of Renaissance intellectuals. The book ends with two useful appendices, one inventorying printings of student manuals to 1529 (180 are recorded), and the other lexica to 1529 (Botley counts thirty-five). Botley tries to resolve issues of dating, the most surprising of which is the need to determine which dating system was used by a given printing, that in accord with Theodore Gaza's *De Mensibus*, or that based on a different calendar.

In a speculative Epilogue, Botley argues that the more than 100 printings of Greek grammars, if we suppose an average print run of 1,000, suggests that as a conservative figure more than 100,000 students tried their hand at learning Greek between 1471 and 1529. The exact figure is, of course, impossible to know, but I find his argument reasonable. Since Greek increasingly became a mainstay of humanist education in the Renaissance, this figure amounts to roughly 1,700 students per year, obviously fewer at the start of the period and more towards the end. Such a figure has implications for the economic support of, and demand for, teachers of Greek. But that is another subject and perhaps another book.

JOHN MONFASANI

The University at Albany, State University of New York