

**Craig W. Kallendorf (ed.),** *A Companion to the Classical Tradition*, advisory editors Ward Briggs, Julia Gaisser, Charles Martindale, Malden–Oxford–Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2007, XI, 491 pp., 27 figures, 4 maps.

*A Companion to the Classical Tradition* [= CCT] is part of the “Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World” series. Its aim is to present, in a very concise and clear way, the state of research of the most important problems referring to wide-ranging antiquity (history, culture, literature, classical tradition). Each volume consists of short essays by specialists in a particular discipline, whose topic is determined by general issues discussed by a given *Companion*. It ensures multilateral view on each subject. Naturally, such short texts can only outline issues; however, they encourage to further research. CCT is not an exception here.

CCT has three divisions: “Periods”, “Places” and “Contemporary Themes”, preceded by a chapter concerning the presence of the ancient tradition in the educational system (*Education*, pp. 5–14). Moreover, at the beginning of the volume there is a list of figures, maps and short notes on contributors; at the end there is an index of names that occur in the text and, most importantly, extensive bibliography (pp. 408–470). The latter is very useful for researchers of reception of antiquity. It is a review of the most important books concerning the issue of presence of the classical tradition on all levels discussed in the CCT. In addition, after each chapter, the reader will find a list of further reading on the subject concerned.

The *Introduction* (pp. 1–4) to the companion is an essay written by the editor of the book, Craig W. Kallendorf. The author gives the foundations of the volume and suggests that it is aimed at “nonspecialists, from advanced undergraduates and postgraduate students to general readers and professors in other fields” (p. 1). The main purpose of the book is to be a guide that gives readers a possibility to do their own further research. The author attempts to define the notion of the “classical tradition” referring to the established concept by Gilbert Highet, the author of *The Classical Tradition. Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature* (Oxford 1949). Kallendorf takes a different view, which is the consequence of his different methodological approach. The “classical tradition” is not a complete and defined set of values and ancient texts, but rather an ever-changing concept, which is created anew by the readers. In comparison with Highet he assumes a different way of thinking and talking about classical tradition (“[t]he change is how we know what we know in this area”, p. 2), and also points out the increase in the factual knowledge of antiquity.

Next, Kallendorf presents a brief review of the content of the volume with the stress on particularly interesting or innovative chapters. The point of reference is still Highet’s monograph, however, the author indicates that it has some gaps to be filled. This mainly concerns the necessity of including geographical areas such as Central Europe, which are not discussed by Highet (his book was focused only on Western Europe), and also taking into account the presence of antiquity in new fields of culture e.g. film, psychology.

The introduction is followed by Christopher Stray’s chapter on classical tradition in the educational system (*Education*). It discusses the educational framework for learning about classics and presents changes in its place and importance at school and university. It considers the conditions that influenced those changes, taking into account also theoretical attempts at discussing this issue and the history of the term „classics”.

After this chapter, three main parts follow: “Periods”, “Places” and “Contemporary Themes”. The first one gives a chronological review of the subject. This review uses traditional periodization system and includes the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Baroque, the Neoclassicism, the Romanticism, the Victorian age and the Modernism. Despite the attempt to take a comprehensive approach to the issue, the Anglo-Saxon perspective is predominant in the periodization method (Norman Vance, *Victorian*, pp. 87–100) as well as in the content of the chapters. It could be seen

for example in Bruce Graver's text *Romanticism* (pp. 72–86), which relies only on the English sources.

It is worth noting that, while the composition of the content of "Periods" is a traditional one, the coherence of chapters is quite interesting, especially because of many points of view presented by different authors. On the one hand, there are short outlines that attempt to synthesize the material (e.g. *Neoclassicism* by Thomas Kaminski), on the other hand there are chapters that focus on demonstrating a particular problem which is characteristic for the period concerned (e.g. Bruce Graver's *Romanticism*). It gives the reader an opportunity to familiarize oneself with a variety of views and shows how the classical tradition changed over time. However, it has to be said, it happens at the expense of uniformity of disquisition and consistent criteria, which are important in synthesis.

A similar problem arises in the second part of the book – "Places". We should especially pay attention to a wide range of papers and widening of geographical range, in which the classical tradition was considered. The title of Highet's classic book is *The Classical Tradition. Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature* (our emphasis) and generally its issue was limited to Western Europe only. *CCT* brings into consideration new geographical areas such as Africa, South America and Eastern Europe.

Jerzy Axer and Katarzyna Tomaszuk are the authors of the chapter *Central-Eastern Europe* (pp. 132–155), which should be assessed from two perspectives. Firstly, as establishing some new areas of research, complementary, which are a compliment, to Highet's work, and, secondly, in the context of Polish research on the classical tradition. This first one is decisive when it comes to the nature of the text, which was defined by the assumptions of the whole volume. That is the reason for brevity of the deliberations and their general character. It is worth giving some thought to the place that this issue takes in the area of interest undertaken by Polish researchers.

The point of reference for the paper *Central-Eastern Europe* was Tadeusz Bieńkowski's work entitled *Antyk w literaturze i kulturze staropolskiej (1450–1750). Główne problemy i kierunki recepcji* (Wrocław 1976). It seems worth pointing out the main differences between those two points of view. The first thing, which is noticeable at first sight, is the size of each text and, as a result, different aims of both works. The essay *Central-Eastern Europe* proposes a synoptic view, deprived of the ambition to exhaust the subject and rather suggesting some specific directions of research. On the other hand, Bieńkowski's book is a monograph that aspires to systematize and present the complete state of research. Secondly, as a consequence of choosing those different aims, the arrangement of each work is different. Bieńkowski's monograph is generally written in a chronological order, including the Renaissance and Baroque. Moreover, it is geographically narrowed to Poland, but each of the analyzed periods gave the author the opportunity to present some excursions into European reception of antiquity. Axer, widening the geographical frames outside one particular country, admittedly retains the chronological order (taking the deliberations up to our times), but in each of self-contained wholes there is a tendency to discuss the issues, which are presented in a very general way, in problematic categories and to use rather a small number of references to concrete texts. Thirdly, the arrangement of the considered essays was also influenced by the methods used in research. Axer specifies the problem by comparing (pp. 132 f.) traditional notions of the terms "heritage" and "reception". The aesthetic qualities of reception take the reader as a point of departure, that is the person who construes the text. This brought about, on the one hand, removing the oppositions between the centre and peripheries and, on the other hand, discussing the tradition in two directions.

The third part, "Contemporary Themes", brings a set of completely new issues in the research on the reception of antiquity, which are concerned with the contemporary point of view. Not only does it go beyond the domain of literature (e.g. film, architecture), but also enters the domain of the socio-political-cultural problems (e.g. fascism, psychology, gender studies). This chapter gives also a methodological metareflection (reception and postcolonial studies). Thus, it presents "non-orthodox" areas of research on the classical tradition. The example here could be the essay by

Alastair J.L. Blanshard *Gender and Sexuality* (pp. 328–341). The author discusses the role of the classical tradition in shaping the definitions of “masculinity” and “femininity” and social roles of men and women. Blanshard points out the ancient roots of the roles attributed in culture to men and women. These roles are still relevant today, despite the fact that the texts they were derived from are no longer widely read (for example Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*). The situation looks similar when it comes to the model of beauty or the motif of a weak woman saved by a hero (Perseus and Andromeda). However, the antique models were used by sufragettes as prototypes of women fighting male domination, a notion also inherited from antiquity. That was, among other things, the role of Medea, who earlier used to be negative example of inappropriate behaviour.

*CCT* fills the gap in research on the presence of classical tradition in literature, not only on the Polish ground, but, first and foremost, on the European ground. As stated above, in Poland an obvious point of reference is Bieńkowski’s book, whereas in Europe the monumental work by Highet. This gap was caused by a natural passage of time (Highet’s book was published in 1949, Bieńkowski’s in 1976), and that is the reason why the need for filling it and collecting the results of conducted research became to be felt, but also because of the need to reconsider the methodology of studies of the classical tradition. To comprehend how urgent this need is, it is worth paying attention to the revolutionary approach of the last half century. Highet represents a traditional paradigm based on influences, after which there appeared a global, anthropological, semiotic theory of Bakhtin, who thought that dialogue is everything, then Konrad Górski’s theory of allusions, Jauss’s reception theory and Kristeva’s intertextuality. This list does not exhaust all the available methods of research on the presence of classical tradition. Postcolonialism, gender studies and feminism may be added, and even more.

It is necessary to remember that a new method makes the researcher face some new problems and leads to new areas of research, which have been never considered yet. That causes the many-sided view, hence the new geographical regions and, finally, the different point of view on the heritage of antiquity. This distinctness is based on a dialogical presentation of the tradition, in which the attention is focused on the reader and his reception of a literary text (Jauss’s reception theory), whereas the traditional point of view based on influences is rather unidirectional and monological.

*CCT* is not a synthesizing monograph on the classical tradition (unlike very scrupulous work by Highet), but this should not be regarded as a fault. It is worth remembering that it is the reader that molds the tradition. “This, then, is the classical tradition as we find it in 2007, robust, widely dispersed in time and place, and continuing to be transformed anew as it is appropriated by new generations” (p. 4). The arrangement of the book and its form in themselves are the evidence of reception and present the picture of antiquity in 2007.

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