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Marcus Musurus (c.1450–1517), a scholar from Venetian Crete and one of the few humanists represented in N.G. Wilson’s masterful survey as expert in Greek studies, receives a characterization that could be applied in varying degrees to many other intellectuals of the Italian Renaissance: “[he] was a pioneer; but he left much for his successors to do” (175). *From Byzantium to Italy* serves as a salutary reminder that the Greek revival of the Italian Renaissance must be understood as an evolutionary not revolutionary process. Fifteen pithy chapters trace the slow processes by which generations of scholars from Petrarch to Musurus learned ancient Greek and began collecting, translating, and finally editing texts. Even by the sixteenth century, however, linguistic competence often proved incomplete, and even the most accomplished editors still at times stumbled over relatively straightforward passages and texts. Wilson furnishes detailed accounts of major humanistic projects such as the recovery of the Platonic corpus, but he also explores the early-modern fortunes of less familiar but no less interesting authors such as Athenaeus, Nonnus, and Philostratus. Throughout, he rightly emphasizes the indispensable roles played by Byzantine scholars as teachers and philologists, but without neglecting pivotal Italian figures such as the educator Guarino, the translator Marsilio Ficino, or the printer-publisher Aldus Manutius. This second edition of *From Byzantium to Italy* (the first appeared in 1992) stands as a welcome testament to this study’s enduring relevance, and its updated notes evince attention to recent research concerning the most influential figures and texts.

Since this is a second edition, however, and one that comes a full twenty-five years after the first, one might have hoped to see more interaction with recent scholarly debates and interpretive models. Wilson punctiliously cites studies emphasizing new empirical information about recoveries and transmissions—such as James Hankins’s magisterial 2-volume study, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* (Leiden 1990). But readers will not learn much here about the political, religious, social and cultural worlds that nurtured, engaged, or resisted ancient Greek language and literature—concerns that occupy much current work on the classical tradition. This book

is by no means inattentive to major events and problems affecting scholars, such as the Fall of Constantinople, the Council of Florence, and the struggles of Byzantine refugees to find stable patronage networks and intellectual communities. Nor do we lack interesting comment on the advent of academies, especially Manutius's Neakademia. Yet this study focuses on cultural producers and their texts; Wilson frequently invokes but never specifies or demonstrates their wider audiences. Regarding the wild and nearly instant popularity of Plutarch's *Lives*, moreover, we read that "the exploits of the great heroes of antiquity ... must have been attractive to a public brought up to think of Livy as the greatest historian" (18). What was the social composition of that public? Where did it thrive? Along the same lines, historians of books and readers should be warned that Wilson for the most part sets aside the material dimensions of textual transmission.

A synthetic work such as Wilson's naturally cannot treat every angle on its subject matter while at the same time remaining readable and concise. Still, even on its own terms *From Byzantium to Italy* misses a few opportunities. Wilson wisely retained the first edition's clear and logical structure, but in this new edition he might have made use of the conclusion as a space for opening up new ideas or problems. Together with much of the exposition, however, the conclusion remains almost entirely unchanged. Some bibliographic lacunae also persist, most notably Margaret King's *Venetian Humanism in the Age of Patrician Dominance* (Princeton 1986). Given his unavoidable emphasis on Venice and the Veneto, it was very odd not to see Wilson cite King's study. Wilson also stands by a few summary verdicts that might have been reconsidered. For instance, readers find the humanist Francesco Filelfo (1398–1481) dismissed as an awful man, overrated scholar, and, in terms of his abilities in Greek specifically, all but a charlatan (56–61). Evidence certainly can be found for such assessments, but even so we must question them, particularly in light of the complex and richly-documented analysis of this problematic character to be found in Diana Robin's *Filelfo in Milan: Writings, 1451–1477* (Princeton 1991).

While not without its infelicities, then, this book still has much to offer. Indeed, Wilson's overarching claim for his contribution remains true — Greek influence receives acknowledgement in nearly every book about the Italian Renaissance, but "no one has tried to chronicle the stages by which a lost culture was recovered and so to make clear how its effects began to be felt in various fields" (ix). This statement rang true in 1992, and it still does. We do not lack for new studies of various aspects of Greek humanism, among the most recent and closest to Wilson's scope being Han Lamers's *Greece Reinvented: Transformations of Byzantine Hellenism in Renaissance Italy* (Leiden 2015); but as yet no other scholar has presented the topic as

comprehensively and cohesively as Wilson. It also bears emphasis that some exceedingly popular and useful surveys of Renaissance humanism, such as Charles Nauert's *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* (whose 2nd Edition [Cambridge 2004] enjoyed its seventh printing in 2015), can make the pace of Greek studies seem swifter and the contributions of Italian humanists more decisive than they appear in Wilson's extensive treatment. Even some specialists in Italian Renaissance history might be dismayed to learn that Ermolao Barbaro leaned so heavily on medieval Latin translations of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* for his early lectures (141)!

Among Wilson's many fascinating discoveries and observations, two demand particular mention. We learn here of the often sad fates of Byzantine learned men transplanted to the Italian peninsula (a particularly moving passage on this topic appears on 137). For all the positive rhetoric of some humanists, then, Renaissance Italy did not always prove to be a safe haven for intellectuals. Italian scholars, moreover, seem to have been more than capable of missing or willfully ignoring the work not only of Byzantines but also of their countrymen. Even in the Aldine circle and as late as 1504 participants generally did not know or use the translations of Aristotle by Leonardo Bruni or of Plato by Marsilio Ficino, and they left many knots in the original Greek texts as tangled as they found them (149-152). The world Wilson recovers challenges at many levels our sometimes too-rosy images of bustling intellectual ferment in this historical moment.

Wilson's readership should continue to be extensive. Admittedly, one would need to think carefully about assigning this book in a regular undergraduate course — Wilson writes with punch and wit, but the treatment is often highly technical. That said, all professional scholars and graduate students whose research relates to the classical tradition will find food for thought here. Similarly, advanced undergraduates, and particularly those writing theses, will profit from and enjoy this study.

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