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Review of *Printing the Classical Text*, by Howard Jones

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Howard Jones. *Printing the Classical Text*.

Bibliotheca Humanistica & Reformatorica 62. Utrecht: Hes & de Graaf Publishers BV, 2004. x + 228 pp. index. append. illus. tpls. bibl. €132.50. ISBN: 90-6194-279-9.

The History of the Book is booming these days, as Cyndia Susan Clegg justly observes in a recent review essay: “History of the Book: An Undisciplined Discipline” (*RQ* 54 [2001] 221–45). Jones’s useful book would fit nicely on the shelf with those reviewed by Clegg — probably next to Brian Richardson’s somewhat meatier and more detailed *Printing, Writers and Readers in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, 1999). While Richardson surveys Italian printing through a wide lens that takes in its technology, finances, and audience, as well as its total production through the sixteenth century, Jones focuses on the Latin and Greek texts printed from 1465 to 1500, which constitute only about 6% of the books of the incunable period (9).

In chapter 1 (“The Marketplace”) Jones surveys the conditions, finances, and subjects of early printing. The chapter culminates in an interesting statistical analysis based on information drawn from the *Illustrated Incunabula Short-Title Catalogue*, in which Jones correlates locations of printers with the types of works printed, comparing the numbers of ancient Latin texts to the total number of works printed in each city. Some cities emerge as centers of classical printing (Leipzig, Rome, Paris, Milan, and Venice): no surprise here. But looking at the statistics by city also allows Jones to pinpoint local preferences for different authors and genres: Deventer and Cologne, for example, show a marked preference for pastoral poetry and philosophy — a distinctly odd couple — and no editions of either Plautus or Lucretius were printed in Rome, although Roman printers published editions of forty-five different Latin authors.

Chapter 4 (“Editors and Editing: A Reappraisal”) revisits the well-known topic of editorial quality — or rather, the lack of it. This chapter is useful primarily as a summary bringing together the work of others, including Kenney, Lowry, Grafton, and Monfasani.

The heart of the book is chapters 2 (“The Latin Heritage”) and 3 (“First Steps in Greek”), which seem to be doing different things: the one offering a chronological analysis of statistics of Latin printing and the other presenting a study of Greek printers and works. In chapter 2 Jones, again using IISTC, breaks the incunable era into seven five- or six-year periods, itemizing authors, works, places, and printers year-by-year in each. For me these statistical tables and Jones’s commentary on them were the most valuable part of the book. Jones’s method allows him to note not only when a given Latin author was published, but also what authors were being printed at what time — and where. He uses it to track the ups and downs of the printing industry, the fortunes of particular authors and genres (again by location), the nationality of printers, and the rise and fall of editions with commentaries. In chapter 3 he traces the development of Greek typography and looks at the publishing programs of the foremost printers of Greek works, emphasizing the early printing of grammars and lexica and the influence of the syllabus of Byzantine schools on the selection of texts.

These chapters are valuable for students of reception, but I do have a caveat: this is a book whose usefulness is based on its facts, but Jones’s facts are not always correct. There are small inaccuracies (Hawkins for Hankins as the author of *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* in the notes and bibliography), astonishing mistakes, as when we are told that the Council of Florence in 1439 “brought about the union of the Roman and Greek churches” (135), and significant errors. I point out two. First, Palladio Fosco’s 1496 commentary on Catullus is listed as the earliest on that author (100), although that of Antonio Partenio appeared in 1485 (in the list of commentators and their works in Appendix C, Jones gets it right). Second, Jones suggests that Filippo Beroaldo abandoned commentary writing after 1488 (103). But Beroaldo published commentaries in 1493 (Suetonius), 1496 (Cicero’s *Tusculan Disputations*), and 1500 (Apuleius). The Apuleius commentary,

Beroaldo's most famous work, is omitted from the lists both of Beroaldo's commentaries (Appendix C) and of authors receiving commentaries between 1495 and 1500 (99–100). Errors like these raise flags. Jones's central chapters suggest important topics for further research, but scholars will want to check his facts.

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