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M. La Matina: *I1 testo antico. Per una semiotica come filologia integrata.* (Circolo semiologico siciliano, Working Papers 1.) Pp. 186. Palermo: L'epos, 1994. Paper, L. 24,000.

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M. LA MATINA: *Il testo antico. Per una semiotica come filologia integrata.* (Circolo semiologico siciliano, Working Papers 1.) Pp. 186. Palermo: L'epos, 1994. Paper, L. 24,000.

La M.'s book is concerned with some methodological problems connected with the interpretation of a text. His aim is to begin the elaboration of a common theoretical ground for the various disciplines concerned with the text, giving ample space to the discussion of existing theories. To this purpose he uses the results achieved by two disciplines, textual philology and semiotics, that approach the text, respectively, from a historical point of view and from the perspective of structural analysis. In La M.'s opinion, in fact, the tension between philology and structuralism cannot be harmonized to the advantage of only one side.

The book consists of six chapters, with the addition of some concluding remarks ('Approdi'), a bibliography, and an index of the names cited. The introductory chapter defines the aims and central ideas of the book and gives definitions for the basic technical terms the author will use. The three following chapters deal with existing theories. The second and the third focus mainly on the developments of textual criticism and structuralism in Italy in the last thirty years. The fourth presents the model of rational reconstruction of the interpretative process proposed by Janos S. Petöfi, from which La M. in part derives his own theory. Petöfi's model, presented in the form of a diagram, is then applied to the analysis of a specific text, a sixth-century A.D. epigram from the *Greek Anthology* (16.388) and its translation into Italian verse by Giacomo Leopardi, made early in the last century.

In the two remaining chapters (5 and 6), La M. respectively introduces his own 'theory of the Editor' and then applies some aspects of it to the problems related to the passage from orality to writing in archaic and classical Greece. The aim of the 'theory of the Editor', as the author defines it, is to study the relationships between expressions belonging to different languages or to different levels of the same language. In the last chapter La M. re-examines his theory in the light of the book by Eric A. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write. Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven and London, 1986). Can Havelock's well-known views about the rôle of orality in archaic and classical Greece lead to a new theoretical model of interpretation of archaic and classical texts? La M.'s thesis is that if we assume a conceptual difference between an oral and a written expression we should as a consequence elaborate a specific interpretative method for this type of texts.

The interdisciplinary approach is the principal interest of the book; at the same time it can also be considered its weakness, since, as the author himself is well aware (p. 14), the danger is that its contents will appear to be excessively commonplace and trivial to a specialist in semiotics, and too difficult or theoretical in the eyes of a philologist. I can speak for the latter, and even if the lengthy treatment of theoretical topics in some chapters is not easy reading, the book is not beyond the reach of a reader who is not a specialist in both fields. Much of the terminology is either explained or paraphrased; the theories La M. refers to are applied to the interpretation of actual texts. The examples provided span a wide chronological range, from sixth-century A.D. Greek epigrams to Italian Medieval and contemporary poetry (Ungaretti and Montale). Even so, it makes considerable demands of a reader without a semiological background.

As the author states very clearly in the last pages (pp. 155 ff.), the book is mainly conceived to encourage the reader to ask a series of questions about the methodological basis of specific types of interpretation, rather than to supply ready-made conclusions. In this sense it is certainly stimulating and well worth the effort.

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