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Todd, Robert B., ed. *The Dictionary of British Classicists.* London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004. Pp. 1120. £575.00 (cloth). ISBN: 1855069970.

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I have to confess that my initial reaction to the *Dictionary of British Classicists* was one of scepticism: do we really need this, and who is going to pay the list price of over $500 (US) for this — admittedly handsome — three volume set? Leaving aside for a moment the perhaps overly brief introduction, the first thing one comes across, however, is the truly impressive list of contributors. There are over two hundred from about fifteen different countries (and not merely eight, as stated in the introduction), and include many of the most distinguished classicists alive today. That the editor, R.B. Todd, could collect seven hundred entries on British classicists from such an eminent and extensive group of scholars — and complete this project in a mere 2½ years — is testimony not just to his organizational skills, but also to the importance his contributors attach to this biographical dictionary. A more eloquent or effective rebuttal to my initial scepticism is hard to imagine.

Todd has produced, together with ten supervising editors, a three-volume dictionary of slightly over eleven hundred pages in length, containing, in alphabetical order, brief biographies of the seven hundred British classicists between 1500 and circa 1960. The definition of "classicist" for the purpose of this dictionary is deliberately and commendably broad, and includes "schoolteachers and tutors, editors and translators, administrators and organizers, poets and novelists, publishers and printers, antiquarians and travellers, and researchers across the whole spectrum of classical studies" (vii). They are deemed to be British if their careers were primarily or significantly in Britain.

The biographies vary from about half a page to as many as six pages, but as a rule are a bit over one page in length. They open with brief remarks about the birth, family, and death of the subject, followed by information about her/his education, career, and major works or achievements. Each biography is concluded with a bibliography in two parts; the first listing the major publications of the subject, the second offering "further reading" about the subject. Initials at the end identify the individual authors of each entry. As stated, these include eminent scholars, but also lesser known and younger scholars, including some of Todd's own graduate students. This range of authors has not affected the content of the entries, which is uniformly good. The editors have been quite successful at maintaining a unity of format and quality.

At the same time, the style of writing can vary considerably from contributor to contributor. The contrast can be striking. The opening paragraph of J.E. Sandys' biography, for example, is quite colourful (in marked contrast, apparently, to the man himself): "John Edwin Sandys was born in Leicester on 19 May 1844 and died, while passing through St John's College on his way to the conferring of honorary degrees and while greeting a colleague, on 6 July 1922 . . . He was . . . known for a certain reserve, an isolation which may have resulted from the effects of the early deaths of his mother from Cholera in 1853, when 'Edwin' was only nine, and of two older brothers before he was twenty, or from a schoolboy accident that confined him to the library

rather than to the playing fields, or from a youth spent away from his family in the homes of others, . . ." (856). By contrast, the opening paragraph of Byron's biography is surprisingly short and dry, stating simply that he was "born in London on 22 January 1788 and died in Missolonghi, Greece on 19 April 1824" (143). It seems to me that this shows that the editors were very successful at striking a balance between imposing unity of format and retaining individuality of style between the various contributions.

The biographies are brief, but informative, although they have little room for insights into the personalities of the subjects through anecdotes or other means. The broad definition of "classicist" allows for the inclusion of many fascinating persons whom one does not find in histories of classical scholarship in the stricter sense. To give one example, one finds here Bathsua Makin (née Reginald) who, as a sixteen-year-old girl prodigy, published a collection of encomia, *Musa Virginea*, she had written in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Spanish, French, and German in 1616. Much more importantly, she became a strong advocate for women's education (with a major role for classics), opening a school herself, and publishing *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen* in 1673.

Todd stresses that seven hundred entries is nowhere near a complete inventory — and indeed, with "classicist" defined as broadly as here, completeness is unattainable — and he warns that readers will no doubt "regret some omissions" or prefer that certain people had been excluded (viii). This is fair enough. Nonetheless, I am left with some questions. The first is the starting date of 1500. This is not a strictly enforced limit to the extent that subjects like Thomas More (1478-1535) or Thomas Linacre (c. 1460-1524) are not excluded. Clearly, however, a significant portion of a subject's career must fall after 1500. The reason for this date is not given, and its choice strikes me as unfortunate. It is true that J.E. Sandys, in volume 2 of his *History of Classical Scholarship* (1908), states that "Modern English Scholarship begins with Linacre and his two friends, William Grocyn and William Latimer" (228), all three of whom are included in this dictionary. But with its limit of 1500, the dictionary excludes the pioneers who paved the way for Linacre *cum suis.* Absent from the dictionary, for instance, is the Benedictine monk William of Selling (?-c. 1494) who travelled to Italy in 1464 and spent three years there studying in Bologna, Padua, and Rome. This was followed by two further trips in 1469 and 1485, and during these trips he acquired numerous manuscripts of classical texts which he brought back to England. He is reputedly the first Englishman to have learned Greek (he translated a work of John Chrysostom into Latin), was renowned for his skilled Latin oratory and, last but not least, was Linacre's uncle and teacher.

Surely, when it comes to classicists and the history of classics in Britain, Selling is of far greater relevance and interest than, say, Isidor Scheftelowitz (1875-1934), a scholar whose entire career took place in Germany until the Nazis forced him to resign in 1933, at which point he took up a position in Oxford in Sanskrit and Persian philology(!) until his death the next year. Although I applaud the principle that any person who had an impact on British classics is worthy of inclusion, Scheftelowitz stretches both the dictionary's definition of "British" and its definition of "classicist" beyond the breaking point. A far more important foreign "British" classicist is surely Poggio Braciolini (1380-1459), who, after Petrarca, was one of the leading Italian scholars in the hunt for forgotten manuscripts of classical Latin texts. Poggio spent five years in England mid-career (1418-1423) at the invitation of Henry Beaufort and subsequently corresponded with, among others, the archbishop of Canterbury, John Stafford. Yet Poggio is excluded from the dictionary, not because he is not "British" — Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536), who spent hardly more time in England than Poggio, has a lengthy six-page entry in the dictionary — but because he died before 1500.

I recognize, of course, that any cutoff date is ultimately arbitrary, but by choosing 1500 instead of, for example, 1400, some truly important names of, and (Italian) influences on, early British classicists are sadly lacking in this dictionary. Another important omission, and perhaps the most damaging one, is the lack of an extensive index. The limited index at the end of volume 3 contains only names, and only of people who have

an entry in the dictionary. Thus, the only thing the index adds is the other pages on which that person is mentioned, but nothing else. This means that one will find Linacre in the index, but not, for instance, Aldus Manutius (whose circle Linacre joined in about 1492), or Padua (where he studied in 1496). Likewise, one will search in vain for, say, Horace, or Mithras, or any of the topics on which the subjects of the dictionary have written. Given that the editor explicitly expresses the hope that this dictionary will reveal "patterns of interconnection" and "evolution" within the discipline, the lack of an extensive index is especially unfortunate, and stands in marked contrast to, say, the index of Sandys' three-volume history of classical scholarship, now a century old, where one does find entries such as "Padua" and "Manutius." It would, admittedly, have required a significant amount of extra work, but a detailed index would have greatly enhanced the value of this otherwise commendable and interesting dictionary, as it would have provided so many additional entrances into the history of British classicists.