

ROLAND FÄRBER / FABIAN LINK (eds), *Die Altertumswissenschaften an der Universität Frankfurt 1914–1950. Studien und Dokumente*. Schwabe Verlag, Basel 2019. CHF 68.00. ISBN 978-3-7965-4039-4 (Print). CHF 54.40. ISBN 978-3-7965-4040-0 (E-book). 373 pages with 78 b/w figures and 1 colour figure.

Roland Färber and Fabian Link's edited collection of essays on the history of classical studies and *Altertumswissenschaft* at the University of Frankfurt during the first half of the 20th century is a highly unusual volume – not least because all of its chapters were written by undergraduate students. Aside from the editors' introduction and conclusion, the contributions are ultimately based on students' research for their *Hausarbeiten* on a course which took place at the *Goethe-Universität* Frankfurt in the winter semester 2016–17. As one might expect, then, the essays are somewhat formulaic in style, and are largely moulded by the traditions of disciplinary biography. Aside from half a dozen chapters which take a more thematic approach, such as accounts of the plaster-cast and slide collections (pp. 233–254) or the faculty's library provision and finances (pp. 221–232), the focus is trained unceasingly upon a series of (largely) stale, (all) pale and (with one exception) male scholars, ranging from Hans Schrader, the university's first professor of Classical Archaeology (pp. 47–60), to the future émigré ancient historian Victor Ehrenberg, who completed his *Habilitation* at Frankfurt (pp. 73–88), to the erstwhile Third Humanist Hermann Langerbeck (pp. 199–210), and the Tacitean scholar Erwin Wolff (pp. 179–198).

A contextualising introduction and conclusion by the editors presents the reader with the rationale behind the volume, claiming that the project closes a gap in the existing literature, whilst simultaneously allowing students to fuse the two disciplines of ancient history and intellectual history, giving them unparalleled insight into the historical process, and allowing them to bring to light completely original source material. The volume purports to provide a comprehensive overview of the study of *Altertumswissenschaft* at Frankfurt from the university's founding in 1914 until the 1950s, focusing on overlooked aspects of the history of the faculty and in particular academics' attitudes towards – and collaboration with – the Nazi regime during the Third Reich.

Where the volume deserves most credit is in its provision of a sort of encyclopaedia of biography – its detailed dissection of scholarly networks; its provision of reproductions of interesting documents from the university archives; and its rich treasure trove of new facts, which those interested in the life or work of a particular scholar might find useful as a springboard for future research. However, there are also a number of serious problems with the collection – problems which may in part speak to the difficulty of judging pieces of student work according to the most stringent scholarly standards.

Firstly, the deliberate eschewing of historiographical contextualisation in the students' contributions (as justified in the introduction) leads to many missed opportunities for integrating their findings with broader debates on the history of the Third Reich and the Nazification of the humanities. At times, this problem – which includes the almost total omission of citations of non-German-language secondary literature – can even lead to misleading and erroneous assertions, as in the chapter on denazification processes (pp. 307–322), which suggests that this theme has been thoroughly overlooked by scholars in recent decades, whilst ignoring crucial works such as Steven REMY's seminal monograph 'The Heidelberg Myth: The Nazification and Denazification of a German University' (Cambridge 2002). Many of the contributors seek to judge levels of individual implication and complicity during the Third Reich, without any apparent grasp of relevant historiographical debates which might grant them a more nuanced understanding of the period, and of their subjects' actions.

Far more concerning, however, is the tendency in a number of the contributions – particularly the chapters entitled 'Altertumswissenschaftliche Forschung und Lehre unter dem Einfluss

von NS-Regime und Rektorat' (Paul Kracht and Aleksandar Trifunovic, pp. 89–110), 'Matthias Gelzer – Universitätspolitik und Althistorie im "Dritten Reich"' (Theresa Mons and Carina Santner, pp. 111–136), 'Der klassische Philologe Karl Reinhardt im Nationalsozialismus' (Maren-Christine Klute, pp. 153–166), and 'Die Kontroverse um den vorderasiatischen Archäologen und Bauforscher Friedrich Wachtsmuth' (Christoph Chodorowski, pp. 323–342), to use denazification documents and affidavits as straightforward, factual 'proof' of scholars' attitudes towards the Nazi regime prior to 1945. These highly tendentious sources are never scrutinised critically, or subjected to the stringent analysis necessary when examining documents often deliberately designed to elicit spurious exonerations from the relevant denazification tribunals. The fact that the editors did not intervene in this regard, and that the problematic nature of these sources remains undiscussed throughout – even in the chapter explicitly devoted to the denazification process – is untenable, especially given that, in the conclusion, these flawed contributions by students are then used to suggest that the faculty at Frankfurt were far less in thrall to Nazism than at other German universities such as Munich or Heidelberg.

Aside from this lack of source-critical reflection, the collection also aptly demonstrates the limits and pitfalls of disciplinary prosopography. Despite the editors' avowed desire to avoid 'hagiographic' portrayals of their subjects, the incessant focus on one distinguished male professor after another risks perpetuating patriarchal disciplinary norms, especially when approached in this uninterrogated and unsophisticated fashion. While a couple of non-professorial protagonists have been included, not least the sole female *wissenschaftliche Assistentin*, Hilde Heyland, the account of her tenure at Frankfurt from 1941–46 appears to be symptomatic of her fate as a female colleague in this wholly masculine-dominated world (Lisa Knorps, pp. 271–284). The account is highly reliant on interviews with surviving family members, since the archival record of her time at the university is so sparse, and much of the (short) chapter is devoted to the trajectory of her father and her male academic mentors.

Overall, then, those who desire a quasi-antiquarian collection of biographical and scholarly facts about the faculty members at Frankfurt may find this volume useful. Those interested in gaining a fuller, more holistic picture of how the *Altertumswissenschaften* were taught, how students experienced their time at Frankfurt, and how developments there correlated with more general trends in the Third Reich's social, cultural, and intellectual history, are likely to be disappointed.

The editors, who were both employed at the University of Frankfurt at the time, can certainly be commended for taking an impressively research-led approach to their teaching, which will surely have given their students an invaluable first taste of primary-source research, and which could potentially serve in some sense as a paradigm for future student-led teaching and learning initiatives. However, in this instance, the students' work should arguably have been better guided or contextualised, in order to mitigate the problems noted above.

Ultimately, a student-led project of this kind could have made a more significant contribution to scholarship if it had taken the form of an easily editable, online biographical encyclopaedia (allowing for all the recognised pitfalls of such a genre), or a fully contextualised collection of documents reproduced from the relevant archives. In its current format, clothed in the ill-fitting garb of a work of reputable mainstream scholarship, it unfortunately fails to convince.

UK–DH1 3LE Durham
helen.b.roche@durham.ac.uk

Helen Roche
Associate Professor in Modern European Cultural History
Durham University