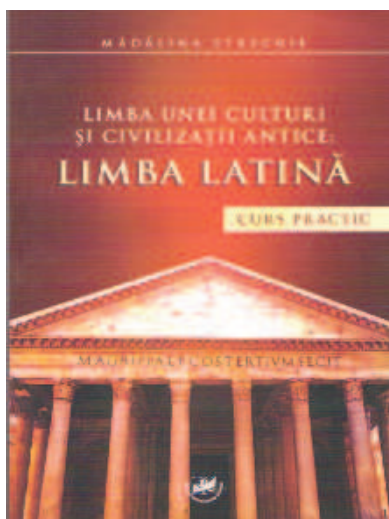


Mădălina Strehie, *Limba unei culturi și civilizații antice: limba latină. Curs practic*, Craiova, Editura Universitaria, 2013, 217 p. (Radu Pașalega)



Whether we like it or not, this is a fact: whatever lacks pragmatic and immediate usefulness is, in the present world, also lacking attention from most of us. In this respect, the Latin language and its teachers are placed in a rather difficult situation. However, Latin does indeed own the advantage of being passionately fought for by its servants. The author is a professional formed in the “old ways” of didactical practice and she has to reconcile this “weakness” with the currently new trends. The present work is an interesting illustration of this dilemma. In the *Preface*, the author pleads for the *comparative study* as an essential method to be applied by the student himself. Or, this is a *classical method*. Among the official *curricula*, Latin is situated in an *auxiliary* position, from which the author takes a paradoxical *advantage*. As she has to constantly avoid the temptation of letting herself go to present *details*, the author makes the choice of *functionality* for the present work, understood in a severe way. Her strategy is to provide *information*, not *explanation*. In this matter, the classical style of didactics is quasi-absent, because *facts are presented, not lessons taught*. Yet, once the information provided in the functional style, the author returns to “ancient” didactics through the highly skilful *applicative exercises* which follow almost every chapter of this work. The amount of information is *minimal* but *essential* (since the author has to obey the current mainstream in pedagogy), but every drop of this avariciously provided information is (exhaustively and *classically*) fructified through the virtuously elaborated exercises. Of course, the information amount and the subsequent exercises are presented, each, in a carefully progressive succession. Since the actual mainstream has come to (in fact) prohibit it, the *captatio benevolentiae* was due to be absent. Forbidden from speaking openly, Cinderella does disseminate tempting clues, such as: “original texts, mostly from the works of the Latin classics, as well as many Latin adages and proverbs, among which a lot are circulating nowadays, because they do express perennial evidence. We have also selected some Latin inscriptions, in order to get the students acquainted with the Latin epigraphic language and its specific abbreviations (...)”. (p. 4) We also have to mention the attractive quotations from some manuals of Latin written in Romania during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The author, with discretion, expresses her anger about the current status of Latin in terms of... *bibliography*, letting us know *what ought to be* instead of the current status of the Latin language. (p. 4) In this respect, the chapter *Evaluation* is a concession the author had to let go towards the actual mainstream (yet, as exams have to be passed, the items do look simpler than the ones promoted by the bibliography of this work). The list of *pluralia tantum* nouns is “pleasantly instructive” (and linguistically delicious) by itself. The *Annexes* II and III were initially papers

presented elsewhere, while the *Annex IV* is a compiling quotation from various authors. All three of them are highly interesting. For the author, who is genuinely fond of Roman history, grammar is only a tool, but an essential and unavoidable one. The author fully honours it and the present work is a... practical one, indeed!... As a matter of fact, since there were no illustrating photographs to be shown and for an easier handling by the students, this work's typographical format might have been smaller but thicker rather than large and "flat" as it is. Yet this is only an insignificant detail.