

Review

GIAMPIERO SCAFOGLIO and FABRICE WENDLING (EDS), *ROMANISER LA FOI CHRÉTIENNE? LA POÉSIE LATINE DE L'ANTIQUITÉ TARDIVE ENTRE TRADITION CLASSIQUE ET INSPIRATION CHRÉTIENNE*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2022. Pp. 253. ISBN 9782503600871. €60.00.

The question at the heart of this volume, the editors tell us (9), is whether Christian Latin poetry was merely a method of adorning faith ('un simple ornement pour la foi') or whether it actively shaped faith, at least for some of its authors and readers. Put another way, as the title does, to what extent does the sense of Roman tradition shape how Christianity is portrayed in Latin verse? The ten papers (deriving from a seminar held at Nice between 2016 and 2018) vary significantly in length, quality and the extent to which they engage meaningfully with the theme. The focus is primarily on poets of the Theodosio-Honorian renaissance, though Ennodius is the subject of two papers and is prominent in a third.

The opening article, by Zarini, looks at how the Roman past is considered in both Christian and non-Christian Latin poetry from the fourth century down to Fortunatus. This range reveals some notable trends: Zarini sees the fifth-century decline of Roman power in the west reflected in a shift of emphasis from Roman exemplarity to biblical exemplarity in the poetry of that period (27–8), but mythological exempla abide (30–1). Zarini concludes by identifying a distinction between 'les poètes profanes', more likely to continue comparing the past to the present, and 'des chrétiens', who tend more to look to the future. The perennial question of how much one's religious identity is reflected in one's poetic compositions rears its head again here in relation to two primarily secular poets: Ausonius (Scafoglio) and Claudian (Charlet). Three of the latter's *Carmina minora*, rejected as spurious by Hall in his Teubner but reclaimed for the poet in the Budé, deal closely with pagan religion, and Charlet here gives in greater detail his reasoning for retaining the poems as authentic while also suggesting the pagan elements are more indicative of 'un patriotism culturel' than any personal devotion. Scafoglio's analysis of a selection of Ausonius' poems is intended to trace the development of the poet's approach to Christianity over his literary career. The article contains some fine close readings of the *Ephemeris* and the *Gratiarum actio*, in particular, though the overall image of Ausonius as a Christian who is not particularly vocal about the fact is hardly revolutionary. Scafoglio's comments (55–6) on the extent to which an author's personal religious views can ever be divined from their poetry should be required reading for all those contemplating such questions.

Three papers address the book's theme directly. The contribution of Wendling on Prudentius' *Contra Orationem Symmachi* is perhaps the most stimulating piece in the volume, and the one most deserving of consultation by non-specialists. At once deeply thought-provoking and frustrating, Wendling's piece asks whether Prudentius should be seen as a theological writing in verse or as a poet who deals with theology. Consideration of the nature of theological poetry from the perspective of contemporary theology (96) is fresh and original. On the other hand, many thoughtful questions (for example, whether or not we should consider the poem 'literature', 117) are not fully answered, and awareness of Alan Cameron's argument about the date and composition of the work (*Last Pagans of Rome* (2011), 337–49) could have helped the author in considering whether this is a detached work of literature or an active engagement in an ongoing theological debate about pagan iconography. Nevertheless, this reading of the poem provides much food for thought.

In her article on the sacred spaces of Prudentius' *Peristephanon*, Soler suggests that Prudentius innovates by making martyrs' tombs into specific *loca sancta* (in contrast to earlier Christian thought, which stresses that holiness is not tied to a specific place). Yet the brief paper suffers from a lack of consideration of Prudentius' predecessors (both Ambrose and Damasus tie martyrs closely to place) and of the substantial scholarship on this topic: above all S. Diefenbach, *Römische Erinnerungsräume* (2008) and M. Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of Martyrs* (1993) — the latter name-checked in a footnote but not engaged with meaningfully. In a parallel article, Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard surveys the influence of the form of pagan verse epigrams on Christian epigraphic poetry from the third to the sixth centuries.

Goldlust's concluding article takes Ennodius' *Epithalamium* as a case study for how poetry's treatment of doctrinal problems (here, excessive asceticism) can be affected by form and tradition. Within the *Epithalamium*, Cupid violently denounces virginity, a fairly shocking thing to occur in the work of a sixth-century bishop. Goldlust stresses how Ennodius' writing reflects his competing loyalties to his faith and to the poetic tradition (especially that of the epithalamium). For Goldlust, the very fact of writing within an existing genre means that Ennodius will be constrained in how he can articulate a theological problem. Important context for the poet's self-perception is provided by Urlacher-Becht, who shows how the secular image of the skilled orator is given pride of place within Ennodius' works: literary artistry and purple passages are central to his poetic and episcopal self-presentation.

Few are likely to read this volume cover to cover, and as is often the case with edited collections, the articles do not cohere in theme as much as one might wish. Nevertheless, there is plenty of material for the specialist to consider here, and the book as a whole is a testament to the very vibrant state of Francophone scholarship on late Latin poetry.

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