

Lucius' 'Romecoming' is endorsed by Tilg), then the Isis procession as a reflection of, possibly a parody of, a Roman triumph is certainly relevant.

The volume ends on a very pleasant note, when Smith finds a final, instructive analogue to Apuleius' intrusion into his narrative via the notorious *Madaurensis* (11.27.9, which Harrison refers to as 'the bombshell') in Chaucer's address to his readers at the end of the *Canterbury Tales*: the bumbling narrator of the Tale of Sir Thopas becomes the author of the whole. The idea that an author would appear at the end of what is certainly a great book to claim authorship of it is persuasive. No ironic reading of Book 11 can undermine the greatness of the *Metamorphoses* itself. Why would Apuleius intrude in his narrative only to laugh at the reader who took the fiction seriously? After all, if we had read that Bottom came from Stratford-on-Avon, would our reaction be to kick ourselves for finding truth and beauty in a tale of a fool's transformation that is, after all, only fiction?

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SIDONIUS APOLLINARIS

SANTELIA (S.) (ed., trans.) *Sidonio Apollinare: Carme 16, Eucharisticon ad Faustum episcopum*. (Biblioteca della Tradizione Classica 4.) Pp. 174. Bari: Cacucci Editore, 2012. Paper, €18. ISBN: 978-88-6611-199-3.

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This book is the first Italian translation of the poetical work *Eucharisticon* by Sidonius Apollinaris. As usual in this kind of text, the editor adds a detailed commentary and an introduction where the author and the stylistic aspects of the poem are described. In the preface, J. van Waarden gives an overview of the international research project, based at the Dutch Centre for Patristic Research – and which S. is working with – devoted to a complete re-evaluation of Sidonius. The present commentary is a preliminary step in deciphering the poet and his elusiveness (p. 11).

In the introduction (pp. 13–64) S. focuses on the text and its context. She starts with a short analysis of the notion of Christianity for Sidonius and then moves on to a close description of the literary structure of the poem, which is organised according to a triadic system quite common to late-antique literature (pp. 19–20): Sidonius adopted a ring composition narrative scheme, with the beginning and end part related, and other central parts, in this case four. The rich series of biblical quotations all taken from the Old Testament are a good proof of the religious knowledge of Sidonius, *pace* the traditional interpretations of Stevens (1933) and Loyen (1943), who agreed on his 'naive unorthodoxy'. As S. shows in detail, Sidonius' biblical awareness cannot be doubted. The last part of the introduction is devoted to the stylistic and metrical characteristics of the poem (pp. 50–6).

Then S. moves on to context and she starts with the literary circle to which Sidonius belonged, with Faustus, Claudianus Mamertus and others. A good example of these close ties is *Epist.* 9, which Sidonius wrote to Faustus. One of the most original theological debates of fifth-century Gaul concerned the nature of the soul. This debate was conducted and has been consequently transmitted to posterity through the medium of letters, and it is a good example of how theology and friendship may overlap. But these literary discussions are also *dialogi in absentia*, where the atmosphere of the philosophic gymnasium was recreated. For this reason, it is quite astonishing to read that many members of the

Lerinian monasticism considered philosophy as a dangerous and demonic weapon (p. 45). I think this is an oversimplification: Lerinian monks did use philosophy and Faustus is described by Sidonius – in *Epist.* 9 – as the model of the new Christian philosopher. The elusiveness attributed to Sidonius and others seems to be precisely a different way to think about and practise philosophy.

The second part of the book contains the Italian translation of the poem, followed by the most interesting part: the commentary (pp. 75–143). Here S. insists on philological explorations of the poem and this approach opens a door to Sidonius' mentality and his vast literary and theological background.

S.'s approach and conclusions are acceptable. However, it would have been useful to stress, for example, the sharp contrast with the panegyric of Anthemius (*Carm.* 1) or Avitus (*Carm.* 7): Anthemius' coming to the throne is compared to that of Jupiter after the elimination of Saturn and, in the case of Avitus, Jupiter brings together an assembly of gods as a sort of divine senate which is asked to ratify his decision to name Avitus as the new emperor. At the beginning of the *Eucharisticon ad Faustum*, Sidonius says explicitly he will not appeal to Phoebus, Pallas, the muses and Orpheus, but to the Holy Spirit. What does this really mean? Are we sure that in his mind there was a modern separation between 'pagan' and 'Christian' literary genres? This scheme needs more attention in order to understand the intellectual hierarchy of Sidonius' mind. On the contrary, we risk assigning a peculiar – and unique – role to Sidonius as the interpreter of a new Christian idea of poetry. But Sidonius was not alone in this transformation – Ennodius of Pavia did something similar – and the goal is something more than the 'Christianization' of the classical heritage: Sidonius is taking into account the transformation of the school system and its principal subjects (rhetoric and philosophy). Faustus, Sidonius and many other members of the Gallic literary circles seem to have been quite aware of this passage; more or less aware as the emperor Julian himself.

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BEDE

TINELLI (E.) (ed., trans.) *Beda il Venerabile: De natura rerum*. (Biblioteca della Tradizione Classica 6.) Pp. 182. Bari: Cacucci Editore, 2013. Paper, €20. ISBN: 978-88-6611-223-5.

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Like one who stands at the bus stop for hours and then sees two buses arrive together, Bede's treatise *De natura rerum*, one of his earliest compositions, has waited over a millennium to be translated from the Latin, and now in short space two translations have appeared: the book under review, T.'s Italian rendering of Bede's text, and the English translation by C. Kendall and F. Wallis (*Bede. On the Nature of Things and On Times* [2010]). Anglophone readers might wonder why there should be any need to take note of the former when the latter, produced by two highly-skilled experts, is available, but these books have different perspectives and each confers its own benefits, as this review will try to show. I am grateful for the insights gained from T., and would recommend the book, with a few caveats.

First some comparisons: Kendall and Wallis bundle *De natura rerum* with its companion treatise, Bede's *De temporibus*, his first foray into *computus*, and their introduction