

FRASSINETTI (P.) *Pagine sull'Octavia. Bibliografia dell'autore. A cura di Lucia Di Salvo*. Pp. 113. Genoa: Tilgher-Genova, 2012. Paper, €13.50. ISBN: 978-88-7903-185-1.

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This slim volume celebrates the 90th birthday of the Genoese scholar Paolo Frassinetti. L. Di Salvo (F.'s collaborator on critical editions of Sallust and the satirists Persius and Juvenal) re-publishes part of F.'s *La pretesta "Ottavia"* (1973), along with a bibliography of F.'s published works. The latter reflects an impressively varied lifetime's work, which starts with a still indispensable study of Atellan farce, ranges from Pindar to Demetrius Cydones, encompasses republican, imperial and late Latin texts, and includes critical editions of Ennius, Lucretius, Apuleius and Tertullian. F. is particularly interested in fragments and the reconstruction of lost texts, in questions of authorship and authenticity, and in textual criticism, particularly of 'minor' texts.

It is then fitting, as Di Salvo points out, to reprint F.'s now hard-to-find "*Ottavia*". Selecting this work as particularly representative of his interpretative methods, Di Salvo republishes pp. 101–59 of the original volume. These chapters tackle the relationship of the *fabula praetexta* with Tacitus; the author's fusion of literary and historical models; anachronisms and allusions to historical events; *Octavia's* Senecan allusive flavour, as well as divergences from Senecan philosophical thought; remarks on *Octavia's* language, style and metre. Concluding remarks sum up the thrust of the previous chapters – the *Octavia* is clearly not by Seneca – and flesh out this position, rehearsing arguments about possible authorship and dating. F. argues in the end for composition in the period immediately following Nero's death, written by an author, who if not Curiatus Maternus, at least shares the same kind of ideological sensibility. To this work Di Salvo adds a brief postscript incorporating the results of later work from F. on *Octavia*, and pointing to major work on these issues since 1973.

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PALUMBO (S.) (ed., trans.) *Ambrogio di Milano: De Nabuthae historia*. (Biblioteca della Tradizione Classica 3.) Pp. 365. Bari: Cacucci Editore, 2012. Paper, €40. ISBN: 978-88-6611-181-8.

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The Old Testament story of Naboth (1 Kings 21) is that of an innocent smallholder unjustly executed by the wicked rulers Ahab and Jezebel for the sake of expropriating his paltry plot of land. This rather obscure episode is part of the ongoing struggle between Ahab and the Jewish prophets, in which the king emerges as a weak but well-meaning figure, too easily influenced by the wicked Jezebel, but honest enough to show some remorse. Naboth himself remains mostly offstage, but his brief and unfortunate brush with the authorities offered Ambrose of Milan the opportunity for a short, sharp treatise on poverty and wealth. His *De Nabuthae historia* thus reaches us as something between a sermon and a pamphlet, patiently interpreting the story of Naboth and drawing out its lessons for his contemporary audience. P.'s edition provides a text – that established by Schenkl in the CSEL series, and revised by F. Gori in 1985 – with Italian translation, plus an introduction and an extensive commentary.

Text and translation together occupy less than 50 pages, and so the chief focus of the book is the commentary, which proceeds paragraph by paragraph, picking out in each case a central idea, elucidating the argument, and offering verbal and conceptual parallels with Scripture, classical authors and Ambrose's Christian contemporaries – above all, his model Basil of Caesarea.

There is plenty in the story of Naboth – not least its transparent unfairness – which evidently resonated for Ambrose and still does today. Certainly Ambrose had no hesitation in giving the story contemporary relevance: every day, he begins, another Ahab is born, another Naboth is cast out and killed (*De Nab.* 1.1). From this arresting opening he goes on to articulate a vision of the rich as offenders against the natural order, in which all humanity is born equal, naked and hungry. The rhetoric is undeniably striking, although P. rightly notes that its radicalism can be overstated: Ambrose, like Paulinus of Nola, concludes that wealth is not wrong in itself, and advocates Christian charity – not as a path to perfection but as the simple duty of all who have more than their neighbours. Similarly, we should be cautious in drawing on Ambrose for accurate details of late-antique conditions. His illustrations are often borrowed from Basil, and his rhetoric trades inevitably in types, not to say stereotypes: the rich man is in his castle, and the poor man at his gate, but even though we recognise them in church we do not expect to meet them when we emerge. Here P. could have engaged more with recent Anglophone scholarship: the bibliography lacks anything by P. Brown, R. Finn or P. Garnsey, to mention only three scholars who have discussed the *De Nabuthae* and Ambrose's attitude to wealth. In the end, of course, none of this diminishes the force and value of Ambrose's indictment of the acquisitive rich. It remains a fascinating text, and P. is a thorough and reliable guide.

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BURKERT (W.) *La Religion grecque à l'époque archaïque et classique. Traduction et mise à jour bibliographique par Pierre Bonnechère.* (Antiquité/Synthèses 13.) Pp. 477. Paris: Picard, 2011. Paper, €61. ISBN: 978-2-7084-0906-4.

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B.'s *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche* (1977¹), in its various epiphanies, is the standard work of our times on Greek religion. Only the specialists will turn to M.P. Nilsson's massive, and untranslated, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* (2 vols, 1967³); whilst those in need of a briefer, more reflective insight, turn to J. Bremmer's issue-packed *Greek Religion* (1994¹). It is astonishing – indeed, 'inimaginable', as Bonnechère puts it (p. 7) – that a French translation has had to wait 34 years.

B.'s books are usually available in German, English and Italian, but otherwise the story is patchy. *Homo necans* was translated into Croatian but not French. *Ancient Mystery Cults* was translated into French, twice (*Les Cultes à mystères dans l'antiquité*, 1992 and 2003): the first translation seems to have been unsatisfactory. This work is the most widely translated, presumably because of the perceived saleability of 'Mysteries'. Second editions rarely make it into English: thus *Greek Religion* has stood still since 1985 (2nd German edition 2011) and the English *Homo Necans* since 1983 (2nd German edition, 1997).