# THE *PERVIGILIUM VENERIS* IN A NEW EDITION

BARTON (W.M.) (ed., trans.) *The* Pervigilium Veneris. *A New Critical Text, Translation and Commentary*. Pp. x + 153. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. Cased, £85, US$114. ISBN: 978-1-350-04053-3.

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The last English-language commentary on the enigmatic *Pervigilium Veneris* (hereafter *PV*) was published nearly 40 years ago (L. Catlow, *Pervigilium Veneris* [1980]). B.'s comprehensive commentary, therefore, is an overdue and valuable addition to the scholarship on the poem. B.'s work is well-researched, detailed and sure to become a necessary point of reference for any scholars interested in the *PV*. Occasional errors, omissions or inconsistencies in formatting, editing or analysis, detailed below, do not detract from the overall impressiveness and erudition of this commentary, which will serve scholars from the graduate level onwards well.

B.'s introduction comprises sections on the poem's manuscript tradition, date and authorship, metre, final stanza and reception from 1578 CE to *c.* 1800. Two aspects are noteworthy. First, B. supports and adds evidence for linguistic and thematic connections between the *PV* and Solinus' *Pontica* (pp. 21–8), a theory first proposed by Claude de Saumaise in the seventeenth century, but last analysed and supported by G.H. Pagés in 1986. The connections between the two rely on a 'common intellectual milieu, built on the same base of religious-philosophical stereotypes' (p. 28), a milieu shared with a certain Tiberianus of the fourth century CE, who has often been suggested as the author of the *PV* and whose poems *Amnis Ibat* and *Omnipotens* appear (in Latin without translations) in an appendix at the end of B.'s commentary. B.'s contributions to Pagés's and de Saumaise's arguments help date the *PV* more convincingly (although, necessarily, not conclusively) within the fourth century. Second, the novel section on the reception of the *PV* between the publication of its *editio princeps* by P. Pithou in 1578 and *c.* 1800 elucidates an understudied period of the *PV*'s *Nachleben*, compared to ubiquitous studies of its reception in more well-known works like W. Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* (1885) or T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922). The authors and works whom B. considers include J. Bonnefons' *Pervigilium Veneris* (1587), R. Sidney's *Song 3* (*c.* 1580), M. Wroth's *Song 1* (1610), J. Balde's *Philomela* (1645) and Sir W. Jones's *Carmen Turcicum* (1774). Any of these works seems apt for further investigation beyond B.'s quick but insightful analyses.

The introduction contains some minor errors. At p. 30, *facta* of line 23 (*facta Cypridis* . . .) is scanned as a spondee (*fāctā*) rather than a trochee (*fāctă*, as *facta* must be nominative singular and the following c does not make position). Second, though B. asserts that 'the swallow has been celebrated as the herald of spring in literature since at least Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*' (p. 36), the association reaches as far back in Greek literature as Hesiod, *Works and Days* 568–9.

The Latin text is accompanied by a comprehensive apparatus criticus and a translation on the facing page. Odd, unexplained instances of white space occasionally break up the visual cohesion of a stanza in the Latin text (lines 61–2, 87–8). The translation flows idiomatically and proves in most places faithful to the Latin, with minor diction choices occasionally questionable (e.g. eliding the differences between *rus* and *ager* by using 'fields' to denote both at lines 76–8). Some formatting choices are inconsistent: *Diva* at 84, but *diva* at 28 and 50, with no discernible difference in the context of either; *aether* at 59, but personified and capitalised 'Aether' in the English translation; lower-case *laurentem* at 70 while all other proper adjectives are capitalised (e.g. *Troianos* and *Latinos* in the preceding line).

The commentary is usefully sectioned by full reproductions of each line, further subdivided as needed by portions of the line under discussion. The format obviates the need to flip between the main text and the commentary. One lemma (p. 127, '*genetrix*' under line 76) appears misplaced or misleadingly chosen given its lack of appearance in the line under discussion. Typographical or formatting errors occur very infrequently ('multipe' for 'multiple', p. 81; missing comma between 'Mackail (1912)' and 'Rand (1934)', p. 98; missing year of publication for Formicola while all other citations include a date, pp. 103 and 108), as do a few factual errors or unverifiable assertions. For example, at p. 81, B. refers to fifteen instances of the pronoun *ipsa* denoting Venus without any listing of the line numbers, while I count only fourteen (13, 14, 15, 22, 28, 40, 41, 50, 63, 69, 70, 72, 78, 79). Also, B.'s assertion that 'in Ovid's account [of the brutalisation of Philomela] it is Procne who is the wife of Tereus *and who becomes the swallow* and Philomela the violated sister *who becomes the nightingale*' (p. 132, emphases mine) is incorrect, as Ovid's description of the transformation of the sisters (Ov. *Met.* 6.667–74) deliberately avoids ascribing a specific bird to either sister.

B.'s observations augment and, in places, attempt to correct the work of previous commentators like Catlow and C. Clementi (*Pervigilium Veneris* [1936]). Two aspects of B.'s commentary deserve special note. First, his ubiquitous and thorough palaeographical breakdowns of manuscript variants provide plausible explanations and solutions for textual cruxes that have been hotly contested in scholarship for over a century, most noticeably with the notorious crux at the beginning of line 74, transmitted by the manuscripts as *Romoli* (ST) / *Romuli* (V) and *matrem* (STV). B. follows a suggestion by P.S. Davies ('The Text of *Pervigilium Veneris* 74', *CQ* 42.2 [1992], 575–7) to emend the manuscript reading to *Iulium mater*, but improves upon Davies's convoluted description of the palaeographical error with a lucid and straightforward suggestion of the copyist's combination of the *Rom-* of line 72 and the termination of *Iulium*, the assumption of -i- into the -m- of *Rom-*, omission of the final -m by haplography with *mater*, and correction to the final *Rom(o/u)li* by dropping the extraneous final -u. Second, B. identifies several textual allusions to Classical authors and Roman social practice that are surprisingly not found in previous commentaries. See, for example, B.'s connection of the rose's blossoming (line 26) to the untying of the *nodus Herculaneus* of the Roman wedding ritual (p. 100).

The bibliography is current, multilingual and mostly thorough. However, two glaring omissions would undoubtedly have enriched B.'s discussion of the poem, especially in the commentary. First, the most recent (Italian-language) commentary on the *PV*, that of C. Mandolfo (Pervigilium Veneris. *La veglia di Venere* [2008]), offers different intertexts for comparison or more fulsome interpretations of difficult phrases in the poem. Compare, for example, B.'s quick citation of two lines of Tibullus to explain *PV* 77 (p. 127; see also p. 103) with Mandolfo's paragraph on the line's debt to Tibullus, the *PV* poet's clever use of Tibullus' Alexandrian footnote *dicitur*, and further context for the rural provenance of Cupid in a later section of the Tibullan poem. Second, T. Privitera's monograph *Terei puella: metamorfosi latine* (2007) traces the origins of the Tereus, Procne and Philomela myth from its earliest Greek literary sources to the *PV* and includes the most comprehensive discussion of the sources for and interpretations of the mysterious final lines of the poem (pp. 77–93), at a length precluded by the exigencies of B.'s commentary.

The extent to which this review may seem to nit-pick on editorial errors attests to the overall soundness, utility and impressiveness of B.'s work. His novel observations about the poem's diction and mythological and literary precedents and his discussions of

previous scholarship improve our understanding of this enigmatic poem and contribute valuable insights into its structure and allusions.

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## NEW STUDIES ON LATE LATIN LITERATURE

ELSNER (J.), HERNÁNDEZ LOBATO (J.) (edd.) *The Poetics of Late Latin Literature*. Pp. viii + 534, ills. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Cased, £55, US$85. ISBN: 978-0-19-935563-1.
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2019 marks thirty years since the publication of M. Roberts's *The Jeweled Style* – a watershed moment in the study of late Latin poetry. Although the field has still to follow other areas of late-antique studies into the mainstream of Anglophone academic discourse, there are signs that it is starting to make up ground: a wave of monographs and edited volumes has arrived in recent years, with Roberts's book almost always cited prominently as a source of influence. This collection, comprising fifteen essays by scholars from institutions in the UK and Ireland, continental Europe and the US (including Roberts himself), is the most significant attempt since *The Jeweled Style* to highlight the distinctive poetic qualities of this historically undervalued body of literature. Like Roberts, Elsner and Hernández Lobato take a similar approach to the one pioneered by Alois Riegl – the art historian credited with coining the term *Spätantike* in the late nineteenth century – and situate literary texts in relation to the general aesthetic tendencies (*Kunstwollen*) of late Roman culture. Although they are careful to deny problematic notions of a *Zeitgeist*, their introduction invites us to see the Latin poetry of this period as sharing a 'cultural frame' (pp. 17–18) with various other types of artistic production (architecture, sculpture, silver plate, ivories, mosaics etc.). For example, the spoliation of decorative elements from earlier imperial monuments on the arch of Constantine in Rome is analogous to the way in which borrowings from classical sources are put to new purposes in poetic centos (pp. 8–11), which are the subject of Elsner's contribution (Chapter 5; cf. pp. 178–81). Miniaturisation, hybridisation and allegorical interpretation of pagan myth are also identified as trends common to both literature and visual art in Late Antiquity (pp. 11–16).

Roberts's mode of analysis is more formal, focusing on the patterns of symmetrical composition that Riegl himself pinpointed as a key characteristic of late Roman aesthetics. The beginnings of this 'jeweled style' are observed here in a study of *De aue phoenice*, an elegiac poem of the early fourth century attributed to Lactantius (Chapter 12). Anticipating a fashion that would be followed by Latin poets for at least another 250 years, Lactantius exhibits a marked preference for description over narrative: the reborn phoenix, with its gilded feathers, emerald beak and sapphire eyes (vv. 129–42), is portrayed as a kind of *objet d'art*, while Roberts demonstrates that the opening passage depicting the grove of the sun (vv. 1–28) is organised along the same lines as later architectural ekphraseis (pp. 379–81). These features could also be seen as examples of the 'materialist aesthetics' that M. Squire (Chapter 1) examines in the oeuvre of Lactantius' contemporary, Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius – the P.O.P. of what Squire calls 'POP art'. Optatian's *carmina figurata*, with their ingenious arrangements of verses in assorted shapes and symbols, blur the traditional disciplinary boundaries between philology and art history (p. 28). Squire's lavishly illustrated