

cxlix), which is followed by the critical edition, including the text, the critical apparatus, a section on author quotes and a section about the presence of the *Commentum* in later texts. A section dedicated to the sources, in particular to the grammatical sources, is not included. The critical text is followed by a clear and fluent translation, valuable in that it conveys the traces of orality in Pompeius' manual.

The second volume includes the 'Note di commento', where Z. carefully discusses the textual problems, justifying her choices, illustrates the grammatical sources and separately outlines the features of *vitia* and *virtutes*, providing ample documentation drawn from both ancient texts and modern studies. Of course the main source is Donatus; however, as Z. observes, Servius is equally present, even if not explicitly mentioned, with large sections of quotes from his work.

An appendix of variants and an index of quotes and of technical terms conclude the volume. The outcome of Z.'s research is a rigorous and original work, which is undoubtedly going to be useful not only for its unquestionable merit in textual renovation, but also for its approach, which, while focusing on Pompeius' work, expands into the evolution of the Latin grammatical tradition concerning *vitia et virtutes orationis*.

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LATIN BIBLICAL EPICS AND ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

MCBRINE (P.) *Biblical Epics in Late Antiquity and Anglo-Saxon England*. Divina in Laude Voluntas. Pp. xii + 384. Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2017. Cased, C\$85. ISBN: 978-0-8020-9853-5.

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On the cover of McB.'s handsomely produced book is a plump red apple, attractively lit and glistening with water droplets, as though freshly drenched with morning dew. It is a simple but shrewdly chosen symbol for the complex tradition which links the two literary cultures (late-antique Roman and medieval Anglo-Saxon) fruitfully compared by the author. As McB. points out, the old Latin pun on *mālum* ('apple') and *malum* ('evil') was irresistible to a succession of writers of biblical epic during that genre's heyday (roughly AD 330–550). Eve's temptation in the Garden of Eden, a popular set-piece reimagined in several such epics, is a fitting point of entry into the intertextual and exegetical virtuosity of the tradition. McB. is clearly at home in that tradition and has laboured intensively to the advantage of both Classicists and scholars of Anglo-Saxon culture.

McB.'s goal is to 'provide an accessible introduction to the Latin biblical epics of late Antiquity that were known in Anglo-Saxon England' (p. ix), with a particular eye to further illustrating the *modus operandi* of the Latin biblical poets and demonstrating their value to scholars of Anglo-Saxon literature. McB. succeeds on both counts. He is mainly concerned to make the material more accessible to specialists in Anglo-Saxon studies, and his conclusion, which offers several suggestions for further research, tends in that direction.

Although the very nature of the book's subject will likely make it inaccessible to a general audience – Latin biblical epic makes formidable demands on its readers – McB. eases the way for non-specialist scholars by translating the Latin and eschewing jargon. Moreover, McB.'s work situates itself in the mainstream of the burgeoning interest among scholars of late-antique Latin literature in biblical epic, characteristically recognising 'a richness and depth of meaning' (p. 56) in the genre previously denied by an earlier generation of critics.

The structure of the book, which is based on McB.'s dissertation, reflects his priorities. After an up-to-date introduction to the literature, there are seven chapters and a conclusion. Five of these chapters treat the Latin biblical epics in quick succession, and two significantly larger and more detailed chapters address the afterlife of the Latin biblical epics in Anglo-Latin and Anglo-Saxon literature. The later chapters are well integrated with the earlier, and McB. keeps a firm grip on the comparative dimension of his study throughout, giving the book real intellectual momentum. Two helpful appendices, both devoted to making Sedulius' *Carmen Paschale* easier to navigate, are followed by an index that is rather less than exhaustive. (I noticed some corrigenda throughout, but not enough to vitiate the overall quality of the text. For example, I would follow most other translators of Juvenecus' important preface in construing *canentis* in line 26 closely with *mentem* and in taking *dulcis Jordanis* as the subject of *riget*, yielding: 'let the sweet Jordan bathe my mind in its pure stream as I sing'; cf. McB.'s '[Holy Spirit,] dip my heart into the pure streams of sweet-singing Jordan', p. 29.)

The first five chapters synthesise recent work on Juvenecus' *Evangeliorum Libri Quattuor* (c. AD 330), the *Heptateuch* of 'Cyprianus Gallus' (c. AD 400–425), Sedulius' *Carmen Paschale* (c. AD 425–450), Avitus' *Historia Spirituality* (c. AD 500) and Arator's *Historia Apostolica* (c. AD 544). McB. blends insights from major works in the field with his own original observations, some of which add considerable weight to consensus views. McB.'s unique contributions in this section are largely incremental additions to well-established views rather than startling revisions, but that is in keeping with his purpose, which is not so much to shake up biblical epic studies as to make their best results available to medievalists who can multiply their value in adjacent fields. McB.'s method in each chapter is to examine representative (and where possible, related) episodes from each epic with close readings that yield scores of verbal echoes from Classical or earlier Christian poetry, intricate exegetical commentary and vivid visual themes. This mode is familiar from the work of R.P.H. Green (*Latin Epics of the New Testament* [2006]) and C.P.E. Springer (*Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity* [1988]), as McB. acknowledges (p. 21), but it is again put to good service here. McB. is comfortable with the tangled web of *Vetus Latina* traditions and refers to them frequently to enrich his interpretations (the work of H.A.G. Houghton, *The Latin New Testament: a Guide to its Early History, Texts, and Manuscripts* [2016], appeared too late for McB. to use, but will help inform future discussions of the textual basis for biblical quotations in the Latin biblical epics). In general I found McB.'s judgements about intertextual echoes and other kinds of allusion to be sober and sensible.

For connoisseurs of Latin biblical epic, McB.'s chapters will be a useful source of additional insights on individual passages in the manner of a selective commentary, but the text is often over-dense with detail, and the book makes for a fatiguing continuous read; sometimes McB.'s meticulous approach to verbal echoes degenerates into a sort of laundry list (though the chapter on Sedulius, clearly a favourite of McB.'s, shows more panache). Anyone who has done similar work, however, knows how hard it can be to avoid this, especially when one wants to make a cumulative argument about a group of texts, as McB. does. Fortunately, no one except reviewers need experience the book this way,

and interested students of late-antique Latin literature will use it in a more targeted fashion to linger over close analyses of their own chosen texts.

The sixth and seventh chapters shift the focus to the reception of Latin biblical epic in Anglo-Latin writers and Anglo-Saxon poetry, respectively, and it is in these chapters that McB. is at his most original and enthusiastic. McB. builds on previous work by M. Lapidge (*The Anglo-Saxon Library* [2006]), A. Orchard (*The Poetic Art of Aldhelm* [1994], and numerous articles) and G.R. Wieland ('Alcuin's Ambiguous Attitude towards the Classics', *JML* 2.2 [1992], 84–95) to fill out the picture of the Latin biblical epics' Anglo-Saxon afterlife (the outlines of such a picture were helpfully sketched for Classicists several years ago by R.P.H. Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 353–9). The first of the pair, 'Reading Biblical Epics in Anglo-Saxon England: Aldhelm, Bede, Alcuin', surveys the evidence for knowledge of each late-antique biblical author among the Anglo-Saxons, and finds that Juvencus, Sedulius (especially) and Arator were best known. McB. argues convincingly for more than just a mechanical quarrying of memorable words and phrases from the Latin biblical epics in the highlighted writers: the evidence reveals that Anglo-Latin authors of the first rank regularly remembered and evoked whole passages and episodes from the late-antique epics they studied as young men, incorporating their subtle meanings into their own re-imaginings of biblical material. Bede can stand for Aldhelm and Alcuin too in his tendency to 'look for inspiration among the best, most suitable models at his disposal, the very works that played a role in his own education and the same works he read . . . throughout his life' (p. 252).

In the second of the two chapters, 'Old English Biblical Verse: *Genesis A*, *Genesis B*, *Exodus*', McB.'s running comparison of late-antique Latin and Anglo-Saxon biblical epics takes its most interesting turn. For *Genesis A* and *B*, at least, it is difficult to prove any direct influence from the Latin epics, but other fruitful comparisons are possible: the Old English poets drew deeply from the well of Germanic heroic traditions to endow their creations with a kind of double cultural valence, just as the poets of the Latin biblical epics consciously adapted and transformed traditional Virgilian diction for their own ends. McB.'s discussion of this shared strategy, which draws parallels between Juvencus' preface and the opening lines of *Genesis A* (see pp. 279–82), is particularly rewarding. McB. provides translations of the Old English and ultimately models in himself the kind of doubly-informed reader he is seeking to encourage, pointing out in one place that 'it is in no small part thanks to the recurring imagery in [Cyprianus] "Heptateuch" that I thought to consider the thematic relationship between Creation and the Flood in "Genesis A"' (p. 316).

Though McB. modestly claims only to have 'scratched the surface' (p. 13) with this book, he has done more: he has opened a trench through layers of tough interdisciplinary topsoil for others to continue excavating behind him. For that he is to be warmly congratulated.

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