

## BOOK REVIEW

*The Pervigilium Veneris: A New Critical Text, Translation and Commentary.* By WILLIAM M. BARTON (trans., comm.). Bloomsbury Latin Texts. London, UK and New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2018. Pp. 168. Paperback, \$114.00. ISBN 9781350040533.

After several recent book-length editions of the *Pervigilium Veneris*, a poem of fewer than a hundred lines, was there a good reason for another? The answer appears to be yes: fascination with this strange short poem remains unabated, and anglophone readers have long deserved an update to Catlow's 1980 edition. Barton's *Pervigilium* compares favorably to the more recent Italian editions by Cucchiarelli (2003) and Formicola (1998). The introduction and commentary feature straightforward good sense where romantic fantasy and enthusiastic speculation have more often set the pattern.

The history of scholarship on the *Pervigilium* well demonstrates how the editorial pendulum can swing between conservatism and radical textual surgery. Some editors (Fort, Mackail) tried to force the poem into quatrains, as if it were an English ballad. Others, following Sanadon (1728), tried to classicize the poem's diction by removing some of the occurrences of the preposition *de*, which is characteristic of later Latin. Earlier interpreters (Boyancé, Cazzaniga) attempted to understand the circumstances of the poem's production as a reflection of an actual ritual context, whether a visit to Sicily by Hadrian or a local Sicilian festival. Barton accepts Cameron's reasonable arguments for assigning the poem to a 4<sup>th</sup>-century context and a probable attribution to Tiberianus. In an appendix, he prints Tiberianus' poems 1 (*Annis Ibat*) and 4 (*Omnipotens*). He also includes discussion of the possible relationship between the *Pervigilium* and the *Pontica* attributed to Solinus.

Scholarly attention to the poem's early modern reception has tended to focus on the poem's better-known adaptations in Chateaubriand, Pater, Eliot and other authors since the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Barton's study offers new avenues for research by looking at adaptations and responses from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Works as diverse as Lady Mary Wroth's *Song 1*, Balde's *Philomela* and the

great Orientalist scholar William Jones' commentary on a "Turkish Ode of Me-sihi" demonstrate the poem's solid place in this earlier period's consciousness.

The *Pervigilium's* brevity and the space afforded to the commentator in a book-length edition permit full discussion of the numerous conjectures that have been proposed since the Renaissance. Barton shows good sense in establishing his text. In line 12, for example, he sustains the manuscripts' *maritis* against Rivinus's *marinis*, preferred by some recent editors. In line 35, he accepts Courtney's *armatus*, an elegant solution to the mess created by the manuscripts and compounded by some previous editors. The apparatus is fuller than Catlow's, which was too brief, and more user-friendly than Formicola's, who included lengthy critical arguments in the apparatus itself. Barton could have chosen, however, to omit some of the trivial spelling mistakes found in the manuscripts.

Barton presents some earlier conjectures, which were omitted in previous commentaries, and has dug out several studies from obscure periodicals. The commentary, however, could have included a fuller selection of comparative and explanatory material; scholars will still want to consult Cucchiarelli's exhaustive notes. The bibliography's list of online resources might have mentioned that usable images of the three manuscripts are available on Wikipedia. It is surprising not to see mention of Goold's revision of Mackail's Loeb, and there are perhaps a few too many typographical errors for a critical edition.

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