



## WORKS BY AUSONIUS

SCAFOGLIO (G.), WOLFF (É.) (edd., trans.) *Ausone: Épigrammes, Bissula, Spectacle des sept sages. Édition, traduction et notes*. Pp. 241. Saint-Étienne: Presses Universitaires de Saint-Étienne, 2022. Paper, €21. ISBN: 978-2-86272-765-3.

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The epigrammatic qualities of the *Ludus septem sapientum* and the *Bissula* join them to the *Epigrams* in this volume, though its title might better reflect this connection and the introduction offer a more committed statement of its particulars. Scafoglio and Wolff pay fresh attention to *Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 3261*, copied by Jacopo Sannazaro, which is now understood to represent an independent witness, rather than to derive from *Leiden, Bibliothek der Rijksuniversiteit, Voss. lat. 111*, and eschew an apparatus criticus, addressing textual difficulties *seriatim* in sections devoted to *notes textuelles*, which follow the translations and precede the commentaries of the three pieces presented here.

The introduction commences with the life of Ausonius and an account of his large output (pp. 9–15); then the *Epigrams* are considered in terms of titles, dating, length and contents, with welcome treatments of the collection's bilingualism and its Greek elements, its interest in ekphrasis, its satiric/scoptic strains, the epigrammatists important to Ausonius and his role in the genre's history, and the afterlife of this complicated, wily collection (pp. 15–33). There follow refreshingly contemporary introductory comments on the *Bissula* that touch on genre and Ausonius' presumed models, the extent that biography impinges on our understanding of the collection, *Bissula* as an emblem of gender, imperialism, Roman militarism, slavery, and the relative weights Ausonius might assign to those features of his poem that situate it in a discrete time and place (pp. 33–41). While some might read the poem as more involved with literary antecedents and mimetic limitations, it is proper to clear this wider cultural space for a collection that so clearly invites the same. The introduction concludes with the *Ludus*, set against the backdrop of generic questions, Ausonius' models, the language, style and metrical features of the poem and its afterlife (pp. 41–50). Then comes a consideration of the always complicated manuscript tradition of the three pieces (pp. 50–4) before the volume proceeds to the texts, translations, textual notes and commentaries supporting them.

Unsurprisingly given their length, the *Epigrams* dominate the volume (pp. 56–178), whose text begins with *Praef. Var. 5*, which has been understood by earlier editors to provide the initial poem of the collection, and to whose judgement Scafoglio and Wolff return, not least owing to the fact that this preface is itself epigrammatic, and in the light of the preponderance of evidence offered in the varied witnesses of the manuscripts. The idea that *Prec. Var. 1* ought to be included in the *Epigrams* is rejected. Textual changes of note occasion explanation in roughly 30 of the 121 epigrams, while each poem warrants its own set of comments. The text of the *Ludus* offered contains a fair number of changes from the editions of R. Green and E. Cazzuffi, and it remains more faithful to the manuscript tradition than either of them at points where the text is contested. Scafoglio and Wolff include helpful tables setting out the differences between their editions and Green and/or Cazzuffi, with several explanatory notes in support, followed by the commentary (pp. 194–224). These editions of, and commentaries on, the *Epigrams* and the *Ludus* reveal the editors' dexterous command of Ausonius' Latinity, fine literary sensitivities and, especially, common sense.

The text of the *Bissula* (pp. 180–92) reveals these qualities in spades. For example, in the prose preface, line 1, against Green following Accursius' *tandem*, Scafoglio and Wolff keep adversative *tamen* as reported in the manuscripts, a decision that well accords with the adversarial tone of the preface. Similarly, a few lines later, the editors preserve the witness of the manuscripts in the phrase *cum sine metu et arcana securitate fruere*, but remove the superfluous *et* while jettisoning R. Peiper's syntactically jarring emendation, *laterent*, accepted by Green and inserted between *metu* and *et*. At poem 2.1 both *incompti* and *inculti* are witnessed in the manuscripts, and Scafoglio and Wolff choose *incompti* against Green's *inculti*, based on *Priap.* 1.1, whose diction is widely imitated at 2.1. At 2.4 *Thymelen*, the spelling found in the Paris edition of 1513, is rightly preferred to the various forms of this name found in the manuscripts. At 2.5, the manuscript reading *aut erasinus* is jettisoned for R. Dezeimeris's emendation, *utque Cratinus*, accepted also by K. Schenkl, S. Prete and Green. Here, however, there is no reason to judge *aut erasinus* corrupt, since, as a river, Erasinus betokens flowing water that accords well with Ausonius' point about mimetic form introduced with Thymele, a dancer who also 'flows' in her own way. At poem 2.9, Green's double correction of the manuscripts, *sapiet* = *sapiat* / *dormiet* = *dormiat*, is partially resisted: *sapiet*, the manuscript reading, is retained, but the manuscripts' *dormiet* is emended to *dormiat*, Green's reading, with *dormiet* understood to represent a copying error owed to the proximity of *sapiet*. Finally, at 3.5–6, among emendations offered by T. Ugoletus, Schenkl, Prete, Green and others, the editors follow J. Scaliger's *nescivit erile / imperium*, which keeps to the perfect tense of proximal verses and seems to fit more readily in terms of theme and metre.

The translations ventured by Scafoglio and Wolff walk the line between old and new: the authors find that the French in M. Jasinski's 1935 translation is flat, while B. Combeaud's renderings, from 2010, in rhyming verse, are creative, but often wander far from the original. Older French translations are serviceable, but frequently lack precision and are often based on an uncertain Latin text. N.M. Kay's 2001 translation is praised, and Scafoglio and Wolff have consulted several modern translations in various languages, especially to help render the more difficult of the *Epigrams*. Their goal has been to reconcile the elegance and flexibility of modern French with linguistic and philological precision, while taking into account the playfulness, rhythms and idiosyncrasies of Ausonius' Latin. Their translations surely have succeeded along these lines.

While the authors claim that their commentaries were fashioned to avoid weighing down readers with too much learning, there is much learning plied in them. Apart from displaying a wide literary dexterity that takes equal cognizance of Ausonius' words and the ways in which they might carry meaning, there is a facile handling of the large body of scholarship that has grown up around Ausonius' poetry. Helpfully, the account of this large body of work is melded into the narratives of the commentaries, which are models of fluency and concision, not to say erudition, that this reader did not find an encumbrance. The volume is rounded out by a serviceable bibliography and by indexes of names and of places. This is a substantial and serious treatment of the words of Ausonius that offers important textual, interpretative, dictional and metrical interventions for the three pieces it presents. It deserves to, and will, be consulted – despite the egregious misprint on the title page that I keep trying to see as a bow to Ausonian playfulness.

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