

Stefania Santelia (ed.): Sidonio Apollinare, *Carmina Minora*. Testo, traduzione e note. Saggio introduttivo di Silvia Condorelli. Napoli: Paolo Loffredo Editore 2023 (Studi Latini n. s. 97). XC, 338 p., 8 ill. € 35.50. ISBN: 979-12-81068-18-6.

Scholarship on Sidonius Apollinaris acquires a valuable contribution in this new and important work by Stefania Santelia, introduced by an extensive and learned essay by Silvia Condorelli: not only the first complete Italian translation of Sidonius' *carmina minora*, but also the first complete and annotated edition devoted exclusively to this poetic corpus.

While essays and commentaries dedicated to some individual poems of the collection already exist, this volume is the first study which offers an overall view of the corpus, highlighting the peculiarities that distinguish Sidonius' *carmina minora* from his panegyrics (Sidon. *carm.* 1–8), and make them a cohesive group, with its own internal narrative and a clearly definable poetic line. The author herself presents her work as a translation accompanied by notes “without any claim to exhaustiveness” (p. 1), and not as a true commentary. However, the notes condense a monumental exegetical work in a masterly manner, and have the merit of giving an account of any possible philological or interpretative problems that the text may present, while remaining agile. Therefore, the reader can easily follow the translation and the textual choices made by Santelia without losing sight of the historical and cultural context that underlies the individual compositions, the possible intertextual and intratextual references, and the play of mutual correspondences within the collection. Each *carmen* is prefaced by a brief introduction, which offers the reader indispensable information for a correct framing of the text in the collection, sometimes providing diagrams that help to better understand the otherwise arduous passages written by Sidonius. These introductory pages also serve to better highlight the unitary character of the corpus, presenting the characteristics of each composition as features that are part of a wider, consistent design.

The introduction by Silvia Condorelli (“Le *nugae* di Sidonio: la vita lunga di una *brevis charta*”, pp. VII–XC) accompanies the reader into Sidonius Apollinaris' poetical world, outlining with meticulous analysis the process that led to the drafting of the collection and the dynamics that enabled its circulation and ensuring it a ‘long life’. Sidonius' work is characterized by a marked polyphonic nature: it is not only the result of the poet's literary

choices, but also a narrative of the life of an elite, of a group of friends and correspondents who share the same literary, linguistic, and cultural values. In the *carmina minora*, as Condorelli highlights, this element is translated into poetry manifesting experimentalism, excess, variety of metre and content, literary memory and linguistic innovation, laying before Sidonius' audience a real *tour de force* of allusion to the past and its transformation into new forms. With his poetry of neoteric inspiration, Sidonius speaks to his companions and makes his *nugae* a manifesto of their shared tastes.

The quest for novelty that emerges from the collection is examined in all its aspects. Condorelli dwells on Sidonius's metrical choices, which aim both to display uncommon technical knowledge and to introduce further elements of variety into a corpus already characterized by an explosion of themes, addressees, genres – a corpus that includes a poetic epistle which is also a riddle, a philosophical epithalamium, as well as a number of epigrams that mix jokes and observations of political crisis. Exactly this aesthetics of *variatio* is proposed, according to Condorelli, as a challenge to the reader, who is called upon to follow the impervious path of Sidonius' poetic acrobatics (Sidon. carm. 9.14–15: *Mandatis famulor, sed ante testor | Lector quas patieris hic salebras*). Condorelli's reading, which sees variety as the *trait d'union* of the collection, offers a compelling argument in favour of a unitary design that underlies all the poems in a coherent manner, in a single sylloge edited by the author himself between 468 and 469.

The introduction and the translation with notes constitute two deeply complementary sections of the volume. The section of the introduction devoted to Sidonius' library (pp. L–XC), for instance, continuously makes reference to the commentary on the individual *carmina*: thus, it offers the reader an initial exegetical framework and the key to access Santelia's translation and notes. For example, Condorelli addresses the *vexata quaestio* of Sidonius' knowledge of Greek sources by examining a wide range of case studies, highlighting, for example, how the Anacreontic dimeters in Sidon. epist. 9.13 closely resembles Anacreon's own verses, as can be seen from the possible textual consonances with fr. 11 a Page and fr. 2 West. She presents this case-study just before introducing the analogy between Sidon. carm. 17 and Anth. Pal. 11.44, which is further developed in Santelia's pages devoted to the poem (pp. 151–159). Of particular interest, in this regard, is the case of the adjective *trebacissimus* and the adverb *trebaciter* in epist. 1.11.2 and epist. 9.11.4, two terms not otherwise attested that seem to be related to the Greek words

τρῖβαξ/τριβαχός. In my opinion, this type of neologism is analogous to *tapinomata* found in epist. 4.3.4: *O liber multifariam pollens, o eloquium non exilis sed subtilis ingenii, quod nec per scaturrigines hyperbolicas intumescit nec per tapinomata depressa tenuatur!* The term *tapinoma* is a *hapax*, coined by Sidonius from the Greek *ταπείνωμα*, “lowering”. The term is proposed by the poet as a variant of *tapinosis*, indicating the use of an excessively humble tone, according to Serv. Aen. 1.126: *in gurgite vasto, tapinosis est, id est rei magnae humilis expositio*. While *tapinosis* and the Greek equivalent *ταπείνωσις* are common in the rhetorical-grammatical language, *ταπείνωμα*, which also indicates the act of lowering, is only used to characterize the movements of the planets, as is evident from Plut. symp. 2.149a and Ptol. tetr. 41. In this case, therefore, *tapinoma* is not only an otherwise unattested Grecism, but also a learned variant of *tapinosis*, which Sidonius had certainly learnt at school: the search for a word belonging to such a technical branch as astronomy would suggest a knowledge of Greek that is not superficial, but rather sufficient to create new words not accessible to the wider public.

The volume is clearly aimed at an audience of experts, but it also offers new readers a guide through the sometimes tortuous meanders of Sidonius’ poetic universe. Santelia offers an elegant translation, which manages to be very faithful to the original text, while clarifying some otherwise obscure passages. As an example, one may consider the translation of the first verse of the epithalamium for the wedding of Ruricius and Iberia (carm. 11.1: *inter cyaneas Ephyraea cacumina cautes*) “tra scogli cerulei, cime efiree”. As is well known, the incipit of the poem is problematic: the commonly accepted text actually has *cyaneas* not as an adjective referring to the blue-green color of the rocks, but as a toponym (commonly printed in editions with a capital letter, *Cyaneas*) that would identify the Symplegades as *Cyaneae cautes*, according to Lucan. 2.716: *Cyaneas tellus emisit in aequora cautes* and Valerius Flaccus (1.630: *Cyaneae concurrunt aequore cautes*; 7.41–42: *quodnam hominum Minyae genus aut ubi cautes | Cyaneae?*). The identification of the Cyanean Rocks with the Symplegades is, however, inconsistent with *Ephyraea cacumina*, which indicates the peaks of Corinth, far from the Black Sea. It is true that the geographical notions proposed by Sidonius are strongly influenced by the literary filter and are sometimes generic; however, Santelia’s solution allows for a much simpler interpretation and is in line with the poet’s tendency towards amphibology. In using the expression *cyaneae cautes*, in fact, Sidonius winks at the reader who is aware of the double meaning of the adjective, making the

location a game that surprises and amuses. Moreover, it seems to me that the use of the attribute in the more generic sense of ‘cerulean’ corresponds to its use in Late Antiquity, as shown by the occurrences in Avien. orb. terr. 370: *cyaneo* [...] *aequore*; Prud. psych. 858: *cyanea* [...] *stagna*; perist. 12.41: *cyaneus latex*, where there are no allusions of any kind to the Symplegades.

Sometimes the translation also reflects the effects produced by the Latin text also on a phonic level. This is the case in vv. 1–2 of carm. 20. Where Sidonius writes *natalis noster Nonas instare Novembres* | *admonet*, Santelia translates “il giorno della mia nascita mi ricorda che sono imminenti le none di novembre”, which somehow reproduces in Italian the alliterative tendency of the model thanks to the insistence on the letters *n* and *m*.

In some cases, the translation alone fails to account for the complexity of Sidonius’s poetry, for which the notes offer indispensable support. Particularly interesting, in my opinion, are the annotations aimed at emphasizing the points of contact between carm. 9 and, on the one hand, Ausonius’ *Griphus ternarii numeri*, and, on the other, his dedicatory letter to Symmachus. In taking up the themes and vocabulary of the prefatory letter to the *Griphus*, Sidonius steps into Ausonius’ shoes, implicitly identifying Felix and Symmachus. It is therefore noteworthy, as pointed out on p. 30, n. 1, that in the *inscriptio* that opens carm. 9, i.e. vv. 1–3: *Largam Sollius hanc Apollinaris Felici domino pioque fratri dicit Sidonius suus salutem*, occurs the epithet *dominus et frater*, which is used six times in Symmachus’ letter collection (Symm. epist. 3.69; 2.65; 5.16; 5.34; 5.36; 5.43). Of course, it should be emphasized that this expression is also attested elsewhere in the epistolary genre: it cannot be read as a trait exclusively connected to Symmachus. The earliest occurrences are in Fronto, both in contexts where Marcus Aurelius or Lucius Verus allude to their respective brother (Fronto *epistula ad Antoninum imperatorem* 1.1: *In iis primis hunc tuum discipulum ponito, inibi dominum meum fratrem*; 1.4: *Domino meo fratri peto scriptites*; 3.3: *Orationes desiderat dominus meus frater vel a me vel a te quam primum mitti*; *ad Verum imperatorem* 1.6: *Postremo, si quid humanitas absente Victorino et domino fratre meo mihi accidisset, huic iusta corpori meo curanda mandavi*) and in a passage where *dominus frater* is used as a simple formula of respect, as it will later be in Symmachus and Sidonius (Fronto *epistula ad amicos* 1.27: *tibi domine frater, commodius evenit*). The same expression is then present in a letter in the works of Hilarius of Poitiers (*Domino Fratri Athanasio Ursacius et Valens*) as well as Ambrose’s letters (epist. 42: *Domino dilectissimo fratri Syricio papae, Ambrosius, Sabinus, Bassianus. Laudamus hoc, Domine frater nobis dilectissime, et toto*

concelebramus affectu). Therefore, this is a relatively common epistolary formula that developed no earlier than the second century AD. On the other hand, I find remarkable that precisely the dedicatory letter to the *Griphus*, which according to Santelia is taken up in several places in *carm.* 9, reveals an intertextual linkage with Fronto: see the reference to the *poetica scabies* (p. 111.16–21 Green), where Ausonius seems to recall the reference to the literary *scabies* in Fronto *de orationibus* p. 159 l.8–9 van den Hout: *scabies, porrigo ex eiusmodi libris concipitur*. Therefore, the fact that *dominus et frater* is present in both Fronto and Symmachus might be read as a further piece in the allusive game played by Sidonius.

The translation and the notes proposed in the volume are further enriched by images, as well as by a useful index of ancient authors, works and quoted passages (pp. 315–340), and a note by Emanuele Castelli to *carm.* 16 (pp. 148–149).

In conclusion, the book is an original and fundamental study to understand Sidonius' poems and, more generally, his literary practice. The introduction, translation and the notes really open an insight into the author's way of conceiving his own poetry, and disclose his view on his world. Sidonius' *carmina minora* are a masterpiece in the art of depicting, from the inside, an elite community facing enormous societal and political change. Santelia and Condorelli help us to hear these aristocrats' voices even clearer – and this makes the book an invaluable work for any scholar interested in fifth century Gaul and its culture.

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