

letters were written. The feeling of authenticity was important, although has not been achieved in many instances.

The last chapters deal with the second sophistic and discuss the letters of Alciphron, Aelian and Philostratus. These are separated from the previous examples by the fact that these letters do not cohere in a novelistic whole, but are brief glimpses into the lives of "ordinary" people. R. openly states that she aims to place Alciphron, for instance, in the proper context of epistolary literature, and to win more respect for his undervalued production (123 letters). She succeeds there, too. It is most interesting to see how much more it is possible to say about this author than, for example, the Cambridge History of Classical Literature does. This latter part of the book also elegantly rounds off the study. The theme "apple as letter" gets yet another variation in the letter of Philostratus, showing how much life this metaphor continued to have. R. also makes it clear that there remains a vast quantity of material (e.g., Aristaenetus and Theophylactus) that has not been included in the letters discussed in the study (for chronological reasons).

This study gives the reader a good idea of the vast field of letters in an imaginative and refreshing way. It also shows in how many different ways a letter can be defined, read and used: A letter could be taken as a sign of authority and integrity, but sometimes writers take advantage of the allusiveness of a letter. As an overall comment, however, it must be stated that it is the very aspect of the study that are both its strength and weakness: the term "fictive" remains perhaps too vague, and seems here to be used more or less as a synonym for the word "literary" which, in my opinion, is a too simplified interpretation. On the other hand, the study demonstrates excellently the flexible nature of a letter. Its important features are the peculiar relationship between the conventions of "real letters" and the imagination of the writer, as well as the possibility of different kinds of audiences (internal and external reader). All those who find interesting the questions concerning "fictitious" and intertextuality in ancient literary sources should read this study.

*Tiina Puroola*

*Letteratura e propaganda nell'occidente latino da Augusto ai regni romanobarbarici.* Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Arcavacata di Rende, 25-26 maggio 1998. A cura di FRANCA ELA CONSOLINO. Saggi di storia antica 15. "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, Roma 2000. ISBN 88-8265-094-4. 227 pp. EUR 114.

This volume contains the papers presented at the international conference on literature and propaganda in the Western Roman Empire held in Arcavacata di Rende in 1998. Although the title covers the time span from Augustus to the fifth and sixth centuries, most of the articles deal with Late Roman literature of the fourth century. The purpose of the conference was to discuss propaganda and its nuances, self-censorship and hidden criticism in Roman Antiquity as well as the problems that the application of the term 'propaganda' in the ancient world causes. Since Alan Cameron's monograph on Claudian in 1970 (see also below), which introduced the term in Late Antique studies, the word 'propaganda' has sometimes been used as an interpretative passe-partout in scholarly discussion. Nevertheless, everything, e.g., all panegyrics, cannot be taken as propaganda.

The articles of Mario Labate and Augusto Fraschetti treat the much-discussed Augustan propaganda. Labate surveys recent scholarship on the poets of the Augustan period and reminds us that no one today would argue in such a simplistic way as Ronald Syme in his *Roman Revolution* (1939), who saw Vergil and Horace as propagandists for the Augustan regime. Nowadays scholars pay attention not only to the ideological engagements but also to personal deviations and differences, nuances and variations and the polyphony of the culture of the Augustan period in general.

Catherine Schneider analyzes the Pseudo-Quintilianean *Declamations* (*Declamationes maiores*), dated to the last quarter of the fourth century. The declamations depict Marius, the victor over the Cimbri and Teutoni as an ideal *imperator*, and this causes Schneider to connect the declamations with the discussion and debate after the defeat of Adrianople in 378. The figure of Marius appears in several fourth- and fifth-century texts, e.g., in the *Historia Augusta*, in Symmachus' letters, and later, in Augustine's *City of God*. As a hero of the golden Republican period, Marius must have appealed to certain traditionalist circles in but I think Schneider's speculations on connections go a little bit too far as she hypothesises that the edition of declamations was inspired by the circle of Symmachus and that the pagan senators intentionally wanted to revive the memory of the Republican Marius to symbolize their ambitions. I am skeptical about this hypothesis since, except for the Marius theme, there is no further evidence to support it; not everything that exists or happens at the end of the fourth century is necessarily connected with Symmachus or Nicomachus Flavianus. Schneider is right in saying that the appearance of Marius in fourth- and fifth-century texts is hardly a coincidence but reveals a *correspondence idéologique* between texts. Instead of speculating with details, names and connections, it would be more fruitful to discuss what made Marius so important and interesting for writers – Christians and pagans alike. Furthermore, I think it is rather problematic to speak of the *réaction païenne*, the pagan senatorial class or the circle of Symmachus as if they were clearly confined phenomena; I would rather regard the 'pagan reaction' as a modern construction.

In her article on Ammian, Rita Lizzi analyses scrupulously the historian's account of the famous series of trials under Valentinian I. She pays special attention to Ammian's prefaces in Book 28 and Book 26; in both passages Ammian notes that he refrains from telling everything about the trials because he wants to avoid public censure. With the analogy with the fifth-century B.C. Athenian Phrynichus, Ammian skilfully implies the dangers an author might encounter without adequate self-censorship. Ammian also knew how to please the ruling powers. Lizzi illustrates the internal competition and conflicts within the Roman aristocracy and shows how Ammian, in praising Theodosius *magister militum*, the rehabilitated father, tried to please Emperor Theodosius I, the son, and in demonizing Maximinus as the main instigator of the trials, avoided mentioning the activities of the dominating families under Valentinian I.

Giovanni Polara returns to the funerary poem of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus (*CIL* VI 1779) that he already analysed in an article in 1967 (*Vichiana* 4, 1967). What emerges in Polara's article and the interesting interpretation of the poem is Praetextatus' wife Fabia Aconia Paulina, a strong pagan matron who probably also composed the poem. Polara demonstrates the reactions that arose after Praetextatus' death: the erection of a statue by the Vestal Virgins, a project that was opposed by Symmachus but

supported by Paulina; the intense grief of the Roman people; and Jerome's criticisms of the senator and his mourning wife. Polara also makes a sensible suggestion on the interdependency between the funerary poem and Jerome's attack in *epist.* 23: Paulina's self-assurance in the poem (*felix ... felix*) might have been an answer to Jerome's malevolent words (*ut uxor commentitur infelix*). I did not come to think of this alternative in my article (*Arctos* 28, 1994) and in my recently published *Vettius Agorius Praetextatus – A Senatorial Life in Between* (Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae 26, 2002).

Another retraction is Alan Cameron's article in which he revises some aspects of his *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* published in 1970. With a certain irony he looks back on the 60's when he "with the self-confidence of which only 22-year-olds are capable" and as "utterly innocent of theory" took up his research on Claudian. Despite this sarcasm at his own expense, he still defends most of his views of Claudian as a political propagandist of Stilicho and answers the criticism of Christian Gnilka and Siegmund Döpp, emphasizing that propaganda does not have to be crude, or even untrue, nor is it inconsistent with either art or deeply held convictions. He also stresses that people who read Claudian did not do it for his politics, but while they were enjoying his poetry, they could not help absorbing the politics. He admits that he now would use a different word from propaganda and furthermore, would not call Claudian an "official" propagandist because this may imply that Claudian was following direct instructions from his patron; the conception as well as the execution was Claudian's own.

Isabella Gualandri and Raffaele Perrelli also discuss aspects of Claudian's poetry. In her fascinating article, Gualandri examines the relationship between Claudian and Prudentius, which she calls "una sorta di dialogo, o meglio di polemica a distanza". She surveys the different interpretations of the famous battles of Frigidus (in 394) and Pollentia (in 402). Ambrose, Paulinus of Nola and Prudentius represent the view that regarded the battle of Frigidus as a clash between pagans and Christians – a construction that also prevailed in modern scholarship – with a divinely determined solution whereas Claudian interprets the battle from a secular point of view – a conflict between the legitimate emperor and a usurper. Likewise, in the differing interpretations, the battle of Pollentia was either won under divine guidance or by Stilicho's excellence. In her scrupulous reading of Claudian and Prudentius, Gualandri extracts hidden allusions and polemic between the two poets, e.g., in his *Contra Symmachum*, Prudentius reacts to Claudian's description of Pollentia in *De bello Getico*, and in his *Panegyricus de sexto consulatu Honorii Augusti*, Claudian replies with insinuations about Prudentius' version. Sometimes Gualandri's detailed analysis of sources seems rather speculative; nevertheless, her final conclusions sound quite convincing.

Franca Ela Consolino, the editor of the *Atti del convegno*, surveys the panegyric poetry and propaganda at the end Western Empire and in the new kingdoms of Goths, Vandals, and Franks. She analyses the encomiastic poetry of Flavius Merobaudes and Sidonius Apollinaris as well as epigrams used as propaganda by Roman bishops. The rulers of the new Western kingdoms were in need of panegyrists such as Ennodius, who sang in praise of Theoderic, Dracontius and Florentinus, who extolled vandal kings in Africa, and Venantius Fortunatus, a wandering poet *par excellence*, who set his talent at the service of nearly everyone, Frankish and Gallo-Roman aristocrats, bishops and kings.

Maijastina Kahlos