

trectatorum murmurosa garrulitas et rationis laudabile consilium is known from mss. *Paris, BN, lat. 2449*, f. 48r, *Vatican BAV, Regin.lat. 1625*, f. 65rb, and *Paris, BN, lat. 4886*, ff. 61v–62r. In the other treatise, copied in ms. *Paris, BN, lat. 4886*, ff. 62r–62v, the debate is depicted as taking place between a Christian and an unbeliever (*infidelis*), and thirty-seven answers are given to the introductory phrase "You will die" (*Moriturus es*), such as "It is then, I believe, I begin to live" and "Then I will be freed from the present evils, and enjoy the eternal goods".

Luigi Munzi is an experienced editor who specializes in early medieval grammar. Not surprisingly, then, his editorial work is based on a very sober method, and the commentary provided on each text is highly professional. These texts show that grammatical and biblical exegesis developed in parallel in the Early Middle Ages. Consequently, many features of biblical exegesis came to be transferred to grammatical texts. It was commonplace in medieval Bible study that, in addition to the immediate, literal sense of the text, a deeper meaning must be sought. The grammarians gradually transferred this method even to the study of grammatical texts, and began to approach them as if they had a deeper meaning, comparable to the figurative sense of the sacred text. The present treatises introduce many Christian themes as they pertain to one particular grammatical topic, the letters of the alphabet. Here we are dealing with the early stage in the process of Christian learning, which starts from the lowest things and gradually rises to the heights of Christian Wisdom and philosophical contemplation.

Anneli Luhtala

Ancient Graffiti in Context. Edited by JENNIFER BAIRD – CLAIRE TAYLOR. Routledge, Abingdon – New York 2010. ISBN 978-0-415-87889-0. XV, 243 pp. GBP 70.

The main idea behind the collective volume *Ancient Graffiti in Context* is to view the different kinds of graffiti from across the Greco-Roman world side by side and put them in a wider context. As defined by Rebecca Benefiel on p. 20 of the volume, graffiti are "writings or drawings that have been incised into a surface". Zadorojnyi and Chaniotis elaborate on the "nature" of graffiti. For Chaniotis, graffiti are "images or texts of unofficial character scratched on physical objects whose primary function was not to serve as bearers of such images and inscriptions" (p. 196); Zadorojnyi points out that the primary characteristic of graffiti in societies of mass literacy is their spatial insubordination, which means that they appear "on surfaces *where* they have no right to be" (p. 110, emphasis by the author), and that the situation in ancient societies was not entirely different. Excellent points, but for anyone who wants to create a corpus of graffiti, Benefiel's definition remains useful, as terms like "official" might cause difficulty in the ancient context. In this volume, attention is mostly given to *texts* rather than images, although some articles have a wider focus.

There are three chapters on Pompeii or its surroundings, by Rebecca R. Benefiel, Katherine V. Huntley, and Peter Keegan. Benefiel analyzes the graffiti found in the House of the Four Styles. She describes it as a "moderate-sized home" and wishes to contrast it with the other dwellings where graffiti have been studied in a similar fashion such as the House of Maius Castricius in Pompeii and the Villa San Marco at Stabiae. However, although the house might not be as large as some others, it is far from modest with wall decorations in all four styles as well as a rather handsome atrium tetrastylus. The ground plan and the decora-

tive apparatus make the house definitely an elite residence. Benefiel's analysis of the dialogues between writings and writers is interesting, but does not take time into account – the house features all four Pompeian wall painting styles and that means that the plasters on which the graffiti have been inscribed have been laid in a period of possibly more than two centuries. Were all the graffiti really contemporary and written by people residing in the house at the same time? Were the dialogues separated by decades or even more than a century? The two largest clusters of texts are in Rooms 9 and 13, which have been decorated in the Second Style, that is, in the first century BC. The temporal aspect is, of course, difficult to take into account but here it might influence the results. Furthermore, the graffiti at a low level in the west wall of Room 13 are suggested to have been written from a reclining position, but considering the size and the decorative apparatus of the room, it would seem unlikely to have a couch positioned right by the wall. One would assume that the diners would have been reclining with heads towards the centre of the room and that the couches might have been placed away from the wall to allow movement on both sides – the size of the room is probably sufficient for this.

Huntley focuses on figural graffiti from Pompeii, Herculaneum and Stabiae with a methodology borrowed from developmental psychology. She has been able to recognize some 170 drawings made by children and discusses their distribution in the sites. Inside the dwellings, the emphasis seems to be in small, closed rooms (traditionally called *cubicula*), possibly indicating control over children's activities, but on the other hand, gardens and porticoes around them as well as corridors are fairly common locations. It is also interesting to note the great frequency of children's graffiti in the streets and public contexts – they were present in most areas of the town.

Keegan's chapter on graffiti in Pompeii compares the texts to modern SMS messages, chats and blogs, in an effort to analyze them as places of memory. He uses an inspiring classification of texts based on memory types featuring skills, facts and/or experiences, but its practical applications remain less clear, because Keegan does not use the classification in the analysis of the graffiti clusters. The clusters have been found in private dwellings, public buildings as well as streetscapes, and Keegan seems – at least implicitly – to indicate that they are all alike in relation to access and visibility. But surely the Grand Palestra or the corridor from the Via Stabiana to the Great Theatre are not the same as the peristyle portico in a private dwelling? Most people could visit the two previous sites, but only a few had access to the garden of a private home. Taking the function and surrounding features of the clusters into consideration would have benefited the analysis.

Of the other articles, most focus on a single site or area. The exception is Alexei Zadorojnyi's fascinating discussion on elite ideology and political graffiti. J. A. Baird finely analyzes the typology and significance of graffiti and other types of inscriptions in Dura-Europos. Claire Taylor writes about rock-cut graffiti in Attica and the role of graffiti in the context of the Greek epigraphic habit. In the last chapter, Angelos Chaniotis discusses the definition of graffiti and gives an overview of the graffiti in Aphrodisias.

Katerina Volioti's chapter is the only one that deals with portable items or material culture. She discusses the inscribed letters incised on the bottom of a lekythos found in a grave at Pherai (modern Velestino). The vessel is set in a wider context of similar items with graffiti and comparable find contexts. In Volioti's analysis, the materiality and physicality of the graffiti bring to light the qualities of the *lekythos* itself – how it felt, how it was used. This is very promising, but it might have been a good idea to illustrate the method with a group of similar

graffiti: now the uncertainties of the assumed text leave too much room for doubt.

Rachel Mairs' chapter on the graffiti found at a pharaonic temple site on the route from the Eastern Desert to the Nile Valley maps the history of writing at the site from the 13th century BC all the way to 19th century AD. The official Egyptian dedicatory inscriptions mark the beginning of writing, but graffiti in Demotic seem to be absent from the period anterior to the Hellenistic Greek texts. Most of them seem to record gratitude or prayers to Pan for the successful crossing of the desert route. The tradition seems to continue until the most recent texts. The landscape and location explain the birth and importance of the textual tradition in this case.

In all, the concrete geographical and archaeological contexts are not prominent in this book and there are remarkably few distribution maps – often only one general site map as, for example, in the cases of Dura-Europos and Aphrodisias. The locations mentioned in the three chapters on Pompeii are all marked on the same map (Fig. 1.2) which is a fairly strange solution considering the importance of the locations in Keegan's chapter. One wonders what a more detailed analysis of the locations where the texts have been found could have brought into the discussion of their significance.

Graffiti are a difficult combination of language, visuality and context, and a gaze that focuses exclusively on the text or the image is bound to leave important questions unanswered. This is why contextual analyses are especially important. Chaniotis concludes the volume by writing that the study of graffiti is "never, ever boring" (p. 206); the reviewers can only agree.

Kalle Korhonen – Eeva-Maria Viitanen

MALCOLM CHOAT: *Belief and Cult in Fourth-Century Papyri*. *Studia Antiqua Australiensia* 1. Brepols, Turnhout 2006. ISBN 2-503-51327-1. XIV, 217 pp. EUR 40.

This book is an excellent example of how cultural processes can be explored via linguistic processes. It focuses on how semantic shift in certain terms and the use of certain types of formularies in fourth-century Egyptian papyri are due to the rise of Christianity. The material used consists of Greek and Coptic documentary papyri, most commonly letters, where the everyday and personal language use allows us to also discern the religious views of the writers or of a community. As a term, however, "religion" is replaced by the twin term "belief and cult", which may give us a more exact picture of what is in fact talked about in the papyri.

The rise and spread of the Coptic script temporally coincides with the rise and spread of Christianity in Egypt. Therefore, it is important to find out when and how these two interrelate and when and how they do not. Unfortunately, with Coptic material several questions remain open as the size of the published corpus is relatively small, although the situation is improving all the time. Therefore, problems still exist in, e.g., dating the texts both on palaeographic and linguistic grounds, and naturally this is reflected in the uncertainty of the conclusions drawn from the texts. This is, of course, explicitly recognized in the book which obviously does not ignore other problems one meets when using papyrological material as a source. Choat guides us through those problems towards a better understanding of the varied manifestations of the co-existence of traditional Graeco-Roman and Egyptian beliefs with Christian ones.

Marja Vierros