

Stefania Santelia, *Per amare Eucheria. Anth.Lat. 386 Shackleton Bailey. Saggio introduttivo, traduzione e note.* Collection "Margini" no. 68, Palomar di Alternative, Bari, 2005. 144 pp.

The *Anthologia Latina* contains an elegy by one of the few female poets of antiquity, Eucheria (no. 390 in Riese's edition, no. 386 in the recent one of Shackleton Bailey). It consists of the longest series of *adynata* in the entire Latin poetry: twenty-seven in fifteen elegiac couplets. Santelia presents a new, comprehensive study of this poem, including a tempting hypothesis as to its date and addressee.

The study begins with an introduction to the (presumed) world of Eucheria. It provides an admirably concise survey of fifth century Gaul: the increasing domination of the 'barbarian' allies, the bitter disappointment of the Gallo-Roman elite at being thus betrayed and, consequently, their tendency to cling all the more obstinately to their classical cultural inheritance to offset their identity against the Germanic world. Throughout this chapter and the rest of the book, the references are abundant, and rich, up-to-date bibliographies are provided on the subjects covered. This makes the book an excellent starting point for further study.

I am not convinced by the optimistic opinion which the author has of the settlement of the Visigoths in Toulouse as set out in the first chapter (p. 15): it did not produce traumatic events, she says. If we do not hear of much opposition, it is necessary to be aware of the predicament of the landed gentry (to say nothing of the peasants working on the estates), as Heather has recently pointed out.¹ They had no choice but to come to terms with the settlers, or else – if they had moved on – they would have lost all. As the *sortes Gothorum* comprised no less than two-thirds of the area, a tremendous process of adjustment must have taken place.

Next, the author dedicates a revealing chapter to women in Late Antiquity, - a subject she has specialized in. The upshot of it is that, to an astonishing degree, the position of women in the Roman world has remained unchanged over the centuries, characterized by such *virtutes* as chastity, submission, maternity, and supervising the household, - and all that seen through the eyes of men. That this was true also of the Gallo-Roman region, is demonstrated by means of a series of quotations from Sidonius Apollinaris.

Citing Sidonius and, in the previous chapter, describing fifth century Gaul, the author prepares the unsuspecting reader for her thesis concerning the whereabouts of the poetess. As the thesis has yet to be proved, however, I think this a little premature and methodically not entirely correct.

Then comes the structural analysis of the poem, which demonstrates the variety that enlivens the list of *adynata*. Its models are very heterogeneous, with clear reminiscences from Virgil's 8th Eclogue (and its model, Theocritus' 1st Idyll) and Horace's Epode 16. For much of this, and the ensuing commentary, the author expresses her indebtedness to Marcovich and Georgiadou.²

The author is conscious of the difficulty involved in supposing Eucheria had direct access to all of the different literary sources of the *adynata*, especially the Greek ones, but she has no solution to it (p. 55). I think it would be worth while to try and trace the existence of collections of *adynata* in the schools, on the analogy of the collections of *paradoxa* and, especially, proverbs.³

Verses 15-16 are provisionally styled by Santelia "versi di 'passagio'", but the function of this seemingly lame couplet awaits a real explanation. Marcovich-Georgiadou did not even mention it in their analysis. I think that the repetition *nunc ... mandemus* (v. 13) – *nunc simul optemus* (v. 15) inevitably links it to the previous couplet, and that some kind of opposition must be present. I suggest retaining the manuscript reading *dispectis piscibus*, and interpret it as: "Let us give attention to (delicious) fishes, and then try to disdain seafood (impossible!)".

The next chapter, short as it is, contains the central notion of this study. The author sustains the hypothesis that Eucheria is to be found in the immediate surroundings of Sidonius Apollinaris, and that the poem's *terminus post quem* is the year 458, the same year in which Sidonius pronounced his

¹ Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire. A New History of Rome and the Barbarians*, London 2005 (= Oxford 2006), pp. 242 and 249.

² Miroslav Marcovich and Aristoula Georgiadou, 'Eucheria's Adynata', *Illinois Classical Studies* 13, 1988, pp. 165-174.

³ In ancient rhetoric, *adynata* were thought of as a kind of proverbs, cf. already Ernest Dutoit, *Le thème de l'adynaton dans la poésie antique*, Paris, 1936, and, following him, Galen O. Rowe, 'The Adynaton as a Stylistic Device', *AJPh* 86, 1965, pp. 387-396.

panegyric on the emperor Maiorianus, because there is a marked similarity between the *incipit* of Eucheria's poem and verses 367-369 of the panegyric. Santelia thinks she can even identify the lover who is so pitifully rejected by Eucheria in the last line: *rusticus et servus sic petat Eucheriam*, "(If all the unnatural mismatches in nature I have described just now become true,) then only may a countryman, and a servant at that, come to woo Eucheria." Santelia endorses Mathisen's intuition that Rusticus is a name⁴, and she thinks it probable that he is Rusticus of Bordeaux, one of Sidonius' best friends. It is just the kind of *lusus*, she argues, which one might expect in these circles.

This, indeed, is highly ingenious reasoning and one is tempted to accept its conclusions. If I am not wholly convinced, it is not for want of arguments on Santelia's part. Yet, in trying to falsify the thesis, one is left with some unanswered questions. Could a woman in antiquity, even in privileged circles, permit herself the *lusus* to reject the serious overtures of a man? Next, could this rebuke be the subject of a poem *written by her*, circulating in fashionable society? And if so, could the pretender have been exposed so bluntly, given the extreme formality and caution in manners in these circles, where even men, when in a playful mood, used pseudonyms (I draw the opposite conclusion from that which the author has signalled on p. 66)?

Moreover, even after Santelia's analysis of the web of similarities and derivations, the arguments are not complete as no explanation is given as to why the other possible alternatives (e.g., the wife of Dynamius of Marseille? literary fiction?) are less probable. The author, regrettably, does not go into this (pp. 63 f.).

Finally, the text of the poem, a very readable translation, a series of detailed notes to the text, and a full bibliography, round off this beautifully edited little volume.

The notes to the text reveal every philological and antiquarian detail one might want to know. Eucheria has indulged in a complex *lusus*, indeed! In the last line Santelia is right, I think, to defend the original reading *sic* against *si*, introduced by Shackleton Bailey. But I would not translate with her: "*Allo stesso modo Rustico osi desiderare Eucheria*", but, with Marcovich: "*Then only may Rusticus (or: a countryman) come to woo Eucheria*". For this use of *sic*, compare OLD 9a. "All the other unnatural unions must be realized first. Then, and only then (= never), will Eucheria consider the proposal." This is a more forceful application of the *adynaton*. A broader appraisal of this figure of speech and a more reasoned approach to its function in the poem, is probably the only subject left to be desired in this many-sided study.⁵

It is not always clear exactly which type of readers the author has in mind. The outlines of the introduction admirably serve the general reader, but do not offer anything new for specialists. At the same time, the general reader will be deterred by, amongst other things, the fact that not even the Greek citations are provided with a translation, and by the profusion of detail. However, the scholarly community has overall been excellently catered for in this booklet. Santelia – I am sure – would also be the perfect interpreter of all the gems of late Latin literature for the general public, but perhaps as a separate project.

In sum, this is a highly interesting booklet, clearly written with love for the subject. It offers an authoritative treatment of a unique poem, at the same time challenging the reader to explore possible alternatives. On reading Santelia's commentary on Eucheria's poem, one witnesses not only its background and interpretation develop into a highly intriguing panorama of the literature of the late antique "in-crowd", but also one gets to admire the thoroughness and trustworthiness of the scholar herself.

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⁴ Ralph W. Mathisen, *People, Personal Expression, and Social Relations in Late Antiquity*, Ann Arbor, 2003, vol. 2, p. 40.

⁵ The author refers to Alessandro Manzo's study of the *adynaton* (*L'adynaton poetico-retorico e le sue implicazioni dottrinali*, Genova, 1988), which, however, has quite a different, philosophical and literary-theoretical, scope. There is no comprehensive recent monograph.