

Nobis musica Christus.

Research into ancient and medieval Christian Greek and Latin Poetry

In the context literary production throughout the Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, Christian poetry in Latin and Greek language deserves a place of its own by virtue of its specific content, which in many respects is new in relation to the imaginary and intertextual references of classical poetry. In fact, the great novelty of Christianity regarding the poetic composition in general is that it has developed the potential for a literary creation that is, so to speak, “conjunctural”, extremely diversified, whose primary function is the theological elaboration, in the broadest sense of the term, resulting from the need to translate Judeo-Christian categories into Greco-Roman language and thought, as well as the dialectical relationship between heterodoxy and orthodoxy. From the outset, these were the elements that characterised the construction of Christian identity, through the various Trinitarian, Christological and ecclesiological questions. This is the famous *reformatio in melius* introduced by Jacques Fontaine (1988) as a characteristic feature of Christian literature, particularly poetic literature. This *reformatio* is evident in poets such as Prudentius and Paulinus of Nole, who marked a profound change not only in genre codes but in the very meaning of literary creation in verse, conceiving the Christian consecration of their poetic activity as a form of spiritual offering, renewed in each poem in the form of so many "spiritual exercises".

Under the conviction that this complex reality can benefit from a research space devoted specifically to it, the GIRPAM, "Groupe International de Recherches sur la Poésie de l'Antiquité tardive et du Moyen-Âge" (International Research Group on Poetry of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages), which constitutes an international GIS from 2021 onwards, intends to promote a specialised journal on Latin and Greek Christian poetry on line and in open access (OpenJournal). The journal will be entitled *Nobis Musica Christus*, a title inspired by a line in a famous metapoetic statement by Paulinus of Nole, *Carm.* 20, 32, in which the poet establishes the specificity of Christian verse compositions in relation to the horizon of classical poetry. Its subtitle will be: "Recherches sur la poésie grecque et latine chrétienne ancienne et médiévale". It will have an international reading committee and will be published on a recognised online publishing platform (journals.openedition.org) in accordance with the standards for scientific journals on this platform. The absence of a journal of this kind, specifically dedicated to Christian poetry, in the landscape of journals devoted to Late Antiquity will thus be remedied, and the journal will have the mission of bringing together in one place international reflections on the subject and at the same time providing a reference point for work on Christian poetry, in a line of continuity between Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

The themes at the centre of the research which will be hosted in this journal will be the following:

- 1) philology and history of Christian poetic texts
- 2) transmission and circulation of Christian poetic texts
- 3) meta/inter-textual structures of Greek and Latin Christian poetry¹
- 4) poetological reflections and literary genres in Christian poetry²
- 5) reception of early Christian Greek and Latin poetry in Byzantium and the Western Middle Ages
- 6) new research on metrics, considered either from a diachronic perspective (history of forms and rhythms) or within the production of each author
- 7) the relationship between Christian poetry and iconography³

Particular attention will also be given to the socio-historical and cultural contexts of Christian poetry in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, as well as to the question of recipients and audience response. In particular, we will pursue:

- a) an in-depth study of the audiences for late antique and medieval poetry, taking into account not only the audience for "great poetry", but also that - much more difficult to define - of metrical inscriptions;
- b) the study of the different strategies of 'dialogue' between poets and recipients, in the different social and cultural contexts of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages (with particular attention to the comparison between the Latin and Greek worlds);
- c) the self-representation of the poet in relation to the classical poetic tradition (Kleinschmidt 2013; Hardie 2019), an element that changes considerably as a result of the novelty represented by Christianity ;
- d) a new study of orality and the oral circulation of late medieval poetic production;
- e) research into the reception and transformation of late-antique poetry;
- f) the 'divulgarion' function that this translation takes on, aiming above all to make exegetical and theological speculation accessible, by means of the aesthetic instrument, for the benefit of 'beginning' or 'progressing' Christians, namely people outside the catechetical schools or ecclesiastical careers, but who belong to the elites of their time. From this point of view, Christian production in verse is of great interest for an in-depth assessment of the very phenomenon of the Christianisation of the ruling classes, and, so to speak, of a 'clericalisation' of culture, especially from the fourth-fifth

¹ Not only those directly linked to classical pagan literature, but above all those that arise within Christian poetry, i.e. what studies call "innerchristliche Traditionsbildung", based on the "sekundäre Imitation innerhalb der christlichen Spätantike" (Herzog 1975, 207), with a gradual replacement of the cultural horizon of the Latin classics by another horizon where, as Anders Cullhed (2015) and Karla Pollmann (2017, 76-100) have shown, the classics become the Christian poets of the first generations. The aim is to discover in an exemplary way the meta-intertextual mechanisms of Christian poetry, determining the intermediate Christian sources and the exegetical-doctrinal factors of influence.

² In particular, didactic poetry, biblical rewritings, theological poetry in all its forms (polemical, doctrinal, etc.), hagiographic poetry, poetry for worship (with particular attention to the liturgical use of poetic products).

³ This relationship between poetic text and image can be studied from two angles: 1) in terms of the possible classical and/or early Christian iconographic modules borne in mind by biblical versifiers in particular; 2) and in terms of the possible impact of certain sections of Christian poetry on Christian and non-Christian iconographic modules (i.e. representations with a not necessarily religious theme) in later periods. In this context, particular attention will be paid to compositions that are, in various ways, part of the iconological genre, notably the Bibeltituli.

centuries, and more fully realised during the Middle Ages (McBrine 2017).

Finally, this journal will be interested in research into the impact of late antique Christian poetry on later theological thought. If, in fact, the use of patristic models in medieval and modern theological treatises is the most obvious, the use of poetry is no less worthy of interest. It has a dual function: aesthetic, i.e. to raise the stylistic register of the more sober prose treatises; and authoritative, especially in the case of poets of a certain orthodoxy, already approved by the Fathers of the Church (Juvenius, Sedulius, etc.). In particular, this research could focus on specific points - the poetic texts most often taken into consideration, the geographical areas of greatest incidence, the possible evolution of recourse to Christian poetic sources according to the different periods and the different doctrinal and socio-political authorities, the possible different modalities of this recourse according to the ideological and/or religious perspective of reference.

The languages accepted for contributions to the journal will be those normally used in scientific literature, i.e. English, French, German, Italian and Spanish.

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