that fill Potamius' writings (cf. p. 58). Indeed, Potamius is a difficult writer to interpret. As C. points out repeated in his commentary, Potamius blends stylistic elements drawn from poetry, philosophy, and scripture. Furthermore, the polemical letter to Athanasius and the works on Lazarus and the martyrdom of Isaiah show that he was also given to the most violent and gruesome imagery. Plainly, then, Potamius is not a writer for the faint of heart. So we should be grateful to C. for presenting us with this handy guide to one of the more vigorous and bizarre voices of fourth-century western Christianity.

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A COMMENTARY ON JUVENCUS

C. HEINSDORFF: *Christus, Nikodemus und die Samaritanerin bei Juvencus.* Mit einem Anhang zur lateinischen Evangelienvorlage. (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 67.) Pp. viii + 494. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003. Cased. ISBN: 3-11-017851-6.

Good commentaries on Juvencus are becoming more numerous; the time is coming, and perhaps has arrived, when the fingers of both hands are required for counting them. This very well produced book treats the sections of his epic paraphrase of the Gospels that present Christ's encounters with Nicodemus and with the Samaritan woman, some 151 lines of his second book. It thus follows the established pattern of taking not a whole book (Juvencus' four books are all of epic length) but particular excerpts, as done by M. Flieger, *Interpretationen zum Bibeldichter Iuvencus (Gethsemane, Festnahme Jesu und Kaiaphasprozess (4. 478–565)* (Stuttgart, 1993) and R. Fichtner, *Juvencus. Taufe und Versuchung Jesu in den Evangeliorum Libri Quattuor des Bibeldichters Juvencus (1. 346–408)* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1994), who, together with W. Röttger, *Studien zur Lichtmotivik bei Iuvencus* (Münster, 1996), in a study which is in effect a commentary on passages relevant to his theme, and their mentor, Klaus Thraede, have done so much for the study of this fascinating poet. Though small in compass, commentaries of this kind are extremely useful, not only in their analyses of particular sections—the closeness of the paraphrase, the possibilities of exegetical nuance, and the analysis of classical influence on Juvencus' language are favoured topics—but also because they form valuable testing grounds for some of the more generalizing studies of recent times.

The introduction raises various questions about the significance of these portions within the whole work, and the formal ways in which they are inserted. The issues they raise fit well with the gospel of Matthew, which was Juvencus' primary source, H. argues, because of its concentration on justice and the last judgement—themes prominent in Juvencus' own preface or proem. There is discussion, too, of how material from one gospel is welded on to another, including an unexpected diversion into the nativity narratives, where Matthew's story of the Magi seems to be bolted on to the Lucan account with problematic effects. H. deals summarily, as one can, with the question of whether Juvencus used the earlier harmony of Tatian—no, he made his

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own—and, in answer to a rather more difficult question, concludes that his target audience was a predominantly pagan one, albeit one considered ripe for conversion, without seeking to exclude the possibility of Christian readers.

The commentary has a wide range, and is very thorough. H. is not afraid of long notes but writes very clearly. Taking the text in small sections, he introduces each one with comments on Juvencus' treatment of the biblical *Vorlage* before proceeding to individual details, among which both the philological and the theological are well represented. There are extensive references to other passages of the Bible, in the appropriate original language (without translation), to relevant Patristic sources—mostly subsequent to Juvencus, though much use is made of Origen's commentary—and to Nonnus, the later epic paraphrast of John's gospel. There are numerous illuminating comments on the poet's verbal artistry and *Kompositionskunst*; and, with due caveats about the apparatus of Huemer, careful attention to problems in the manuscript testimony. He makes careful use of his abundant data on the contribution of the language of classical poets, especially writers of epic, to Juvencus' style, and takes critical account of recent writers—notably on the questions of *Entjudaisierung* (Herzog) and *Anti-Semitismus* (Poinsotte), and on various details from Roberts and Fontaine—often making well-judged challenges with his characteristic disarming objection, '*Doch warum . . .*?'

The range and acuity of the commentary may perhaps be illustrated quickly by a selection of comments: on the verb *profatur* (l. 179), which, as opposed to his repertoire of other more or less epic formulae, introduces statements by Christ of particular seriousness; on previous uses of the verb *comitari* in religious contexts (on l. 183); on the place of legal punishment in the world of his day (on ll. 227–9); on the pronoun *quicumque* used conservatively, with an indicative and not a subjunctive verb—perhaps a 'tribute to the language of classical epic' (on l. 237); on the suggestion that Christ's title *Servator* recalls his patron Constantine (on l. 243); on the simple expressiveness of the juxtaposition *Salvator anhelus* (on l. 247). His observations on the second of the two episodes, in which Juvencus skilfully represents John's long dialogue, are no less varied and illuminating. Only occasionally could one wish for more, as in the discussion of whether metrical difficulty alone accounts for the omission of Nicodemus' name (p. 92), or on the question of Juvencus' apparent archaisms which crops up in various places and involves different kinds of usage: *olli* and *mergier* are clearly Virgilian, but the forms *itiner* (used as well as *iter*) and *iteris* are a different matter.

Almost one-third of this weighty book is devoted to Juvencus' *lateinische Evangelienvorlage*. It begins with a useful statement of earlier attempts to relate his text to an extant version or group of the Old Latin versions; the remainder is not for the faint-hearted, for it includes ten pages of statistical tables and then more than 100 pages that underpin them and collate words and phrases from the whole of Juvencus' epic with the twenty or so extant manuscripts of the corresponding portions of the Gospels. This is a valuable resource and a testimony to the author's great patience, but the achievement of hard results in this area is frustrated by Juvencus' ubiquitous tendency to make small-scale changes and rearrangements, and to represent the evangelists in his own poetic language.

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