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Paola Santorelli, *Venantio Fortunato. Vita di Germano vescovo di Parigi*. Introduzione, traduzione e commento. Studi latini, 96. Napoli: Paolo Loffredo, 2020. Pp. 218. ISBN 9788832193398. €24,50.

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This volume contains an excellent Italian translation and commentary of the Life of Germanus of Paris, written by Venantius Fortunatus (d. 609). The *Vita Germani* is Venantius' longest hagiographical work. It was edited for the first time in 1885 by Bruno Krusch, who re-edited it in 1920 for volume VII of the *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum* series of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (MGH).^[1] Paola Santorelli, Professor of Early Christian Literature at the University of Naples Federico II, has published several studies on Venantius's poetry and prose hagiography.^[2] Here she presents the first translation of the *Vita Germani* into a modern language, accompanied by an introduction with notes and detailed commentary. This work is a valuable contribution to the studies of Venantius's corpus of prose hagiography, as it provides important insights into this lesser-known but very interesting work of the poet.

The book is divided into three main sections: a succinct but exhaustive introduction, the translation of the hagiographical account with facing Latin text, and a commentary. Finally, a list of references and indexes are included.

In her introduction, Santorelli addresses the problem of the absence of a *praefatio* in the *Vita Germani*. This peculiarity might be due to the fact that the text is probably only a draft, a compilation of notes that Venantius was collecting to later develop a finished work.^[3] This would explain the style that Venantius adopted in this text, less accurate than his other hagiographic works. Another explanation would be related to the circumstances of the production of this life. Unlike Venantius's other hagiographical compositions, which were written as a response to the wishes of his patrons, this *Vita* was not written on commission.^[4] In this regard, the friendship cultivated by Venantius with Germanus has a crucial role. The poet spent the autumn of 566 at King Charibert's court in Paris, and probably it was there that he first encountered Germanus, who was already bishop of Paris. Thereafter, Venantius established himself at Poitiers, under the patronage of Radegund, who in turn was a protégée of Germanus. It was in

that period that Germanus commissioned him to write the *Vita Marcelli*.^[5] Santorelli describes the structure of the *Vita Germani*, with a complete overview of the content. She highlights Venantius's depiction of Germanus as the ideal image of "pater et pastor populi" as well as his power to perform miracles of aid and assistance, especially in the form of healing. The figure of the bishop as a protector is a prominent element in Venantius's writings, but in the *Vita Germani* the hagiographer placed a very strong emphasis upon Germanus's reputation as a healer and exorcist.^[6] Indeed, miracle stories are a central constituent of the *Vita Germani*, which consists of very little biographical information but a lengthy sequence of miracles. Santorelli investigates the importance of these miracle stories as a further means of achieving community consensus for episcopal authority.

The Latin text of the *Vita* with the Italian translation in the facing page and the extensive commentary on it make up the remaining two parts of the book. Santorelli has prepared a well-annotated and faithful translation of Venantius's rough and convoluted prose, characterized by frequent anacolutha, and the result is an exceptional work in all its aspects – terminological, syntactic and stylistic. Her work is based on the second critical text edition that Krusch produced for the MGH corpus although she has maintained the division of individual chapters as it appears in Krusch's first edition. This choice is very useful as it helps the reader to identify the notes in the commentary, which follow the chapter divisions. Santorelli's comments on her own translation are clear and accurate, providing a detailed analysis of Venantius's hagiographic work, with several bibliographical references.

The *Vita Germani* is most likely the last work of Venantius and it is of great interest among saints' lives as it reflects the early models of the holy bishop that dominated the Merovingian hagiography of the sixth and seventh centuries.^[7] Santorelli's translation and commentary are very welcome because they give fresh insights into an interesting source for the study of Merovingian saints' lives. Overall, this is an excellent work that attracts scholarly attention to a little-known life and sheds further light on Merovingian-era hagiography as well as on Venantius's oeuvre.

[1] B. Krusch, "Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteri Italici opera pedestria". In *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi*, 4.2 (Berolini: apud Weidmannos 1885): 11–27; id., "Vita Germani episcopi Parisiaci auctore Venantio Fortunato". In *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum*, 7 (Hannoverae et Lipsiae: Hahnsche Buchhandlung 1920): 372–410.

[2] P. Santorelli, *Venantio Fortunato, Epitaphium Vilituthae*. Introduzione, traduzione e commento (Napoli: Liguori 1994); ead., "Le prefazioni alle vitae in prosa di Venanzio Fortunato". In *Venantio Fortunato e il suo tempo*, a cura di P. Pecorari (Treviso:

Fondazione Cassamarca 2003): 291–315; ead., “La *praefatio* in prosa all’opera di Venanzio Fortunato”. In *Motivi e forme della poesia cristiana antica tra scrittura e tradizione classica*, vol. II, a cura di V. Grossi (Roma: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum 2008): 689–712; ead., “Venanzio Fortunato e le Muse”. In *La poesia tardoantica e medievale*, a cura di C. Burini, M. De Gaetano (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso 2010): 293–308; ead. *Venanzio Fortunato, Vite dei santi Paterno e Marcello*. Introduzione, traduzione e commento (Napoli: Loffredo 2015); and ead. “Poesia e prosa per un vescovo amico: Venanzio Fortunato racconta Germano, vescovo di Parigi”. In *Acri Sanctorum Investigatori, Miscellanea di studi in memoria di G. Luongo*, a cura di L. Arcari (Roma: L’Erma di Bretschneider 2019): 623–638.

[3] See A. Meneghetti, “La latinità di Venanzio Fortunato”, *Didaskaleion: studi filologici di letteratura cristiana antica* 5 (1916): 195-298: 227.

[4] The influence of an episcopal patron is explicitly evident in Venantius’s hagiographical production, with significant spaces devoted to the *praefationes* in his saints’ lives; see P. Santorelli, “Le prefazioni alle vitae in prosa di Venanzio Fortunato” cit.

[5] The text of the *Vita Marcelli* is found in the edition by Bruno Krusch in *Monumenta Germaniae historica*, published in 1885 (pages 49–54): see above, n. 1. This work also was translated for the first time by Paola Santorelli: see n. 2.

[6] About the image of the ideal bishop in Venantius’s hagiography, see S. Coates, “Venantius Fortunatus and the Image of Episcopal Authority in Late Antique and Early Merovingian Gaul”, *The English Historical Review* 115, 464 (2000): 1109–1137. See also D. Fiocco, “L’immagine del vescovo nelle biografie in prosa di Venanzio Fortunato”. In *Venanzio Fortunato e il suo tempo* cit.: 291–315.

[7] See B. Brennan, “The image of the Merovingian bishop in the poetry of Venantius Fortunatus”, *Journal of Medieval History* 18, 2 (1992): 115–139.