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Imperial Invectives against Constantius II

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*Imperial Invectives against Constantius II: Athanasius of
Alexandria, Hilary of Poitiers and Lucifer of Cagliari* by
Richard Flower (review)

Jan Willem Drijvers

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rabbinic sources but also inscriptions that mention the priestly courses. He explores the social role of priestly courses in order to relate it to purity practices, seeking to determine to what extent priestly dominance affected the use of ritual bathing in Sepphoris. He concludes that the priests did not have special authority over the Jewish people. Even when certain stepped pools in Sepphoris may have functioned in accordance with rabbinic halakhah, such conformity does not mean that rabbis or their followers used them. Miller rejects a scholarly over-determination to explain stepped pools in terms of rabbinic halakhah in view of the fact that rabbis and priests were not the only ones among the Jews who practiced ritual purity.

Chapter Ten ("Non-Rabbinic Ritual Immersion Practices in Post-Talmudic Sources") is a short but interesting survey of non-rabbinic immersion practices in Post-Talmudic sources, including the Jewish diaspora. Here too Miller finds biblically derived general interest and dedication to ritual purity practices among both sages and commoners, reflected in references to stepped pools in literary sources.

Chapter Eleven ("From Stepped Pools to Miqva'ot and the Society that Produced Them") concludes the book with reflections on the society that produced the stepped pools. Each group or movement had its own purity practices. Miller's general conclusion echoes his observations in his *Sages and Commoners in Late Antique 'Ereẓ Israel* (2006): "there is no reason to assume that the sages dictated these practices or were responsible for promoting them in the first place" (p. 220). The book closes with a postscript on the excavation of a nineteenth-century *miqveh* in Chesterfield, Connecticut.

Miller's book presents an excellent scholarly survey of purity-related matters in ancient Judaism, rabbinic literature, and the social history of the Galilee. He is familiar with all the relevant texts from rabbinic literature and with related Jewish sources. His approach is critical and cautious, and unlike other scholars, he does not fall into the trap of associating the material culture in Jewish sites with rabbinic social dominance and culture. One flaw, however, is the too general treatment of the archaeological evidence. Although Miller argues for the complex use of ritual baths and the variety of purity practices, he does not entirely clarify the differences between the various users of the baths and their perceptions of purity, nor does he pay sufficient attention to the archaeological context of ritual baths and stone vessels in Sepphoris and how they were used in relation to the context in which they were found. This is a common shortcoming among archaeologists as well. It is to be hoped that future research will pay more attention to the use and meaning of specific ritual baths in their immediate archaeological context within the household.

*Imperial Invectives against
Constantius II: Athanasius of
Alexandria, Hilary of Poitiers
and Lucifer of Cagliari*

Translated Texts for Historians 67

RICHARD FLOWER

Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016.
Pp. xi + 225. ISBN 978-1-78138-328-5

Reviewed by Jan Willem Drijvers
(University of Groningen)

The fourth century can justifiably be characterized as the age of imperial rhetoric. Especially when compared with the

preceding and subsequent centuries, a substantial number of imperial orations has been passed down both in Latin and Greek: eleven *Panegyrici Latini*, three laudatory speeches by Symmachus, a *Laus Constantini* by Eusebius, speeches by Julian in praise of Constantius and his wife Eusebia, and a considerable number of orations on emperors by Themistius. These panegyrics represent an especially characteristic and significant product of the culture of Late Antiquity and are important sources for our understanding of the office of emperorship. Central to the laudatory orations are the emperor's virtues and deeds; they present a picture of how an emperor should rule, what can be expected from him, and what his qualities and virtues are or should be.

On the opposite side of the spectrum are imperial invectives, that is, speeches assigning blame to a sovereign. A handful of these invectives have survived. Notable in this respect is the *De Regno* by Synesius of Cyrene. Upon failing to gain an audience with the emperor Arcadius (395–408), Synesius vented his irritation by listing the virtues and duties of an ideal king—and reporting the faults of Arcadius' reign. Imperial invectives might also have a theological cast, such as those translated by Flower. The bishops Athanasius of Alexandria, Hilary of Poitiers, and Lucifer of Cagliari composed invectives against the emperor Constantius II (337–361) because of his support for Arianism, a form of Christianity that, in their view, was unacceptable as it insisted on the subordination of the Son to the Father.

Late antique speeches have largely been studied individually and mostly from a rhetorical and literary perspective. As historical sources, both panegyrics and invectives have long been dismissed.

Modern scholarship, however, now recognizes the value of these speeches as engagements with the political culture of the time in general, as well as for the light they might shed on the political and religious policy of individual emperors. As a consequence, these speeches are receiving considerable scholarly attention as, for instance, in the international *Panegyrici Latini* project (<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/classics/panegyric/>). Translations of these texts have also become available in recent decades: the English annotated translation of the *Panegyrici Latini* by Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (Berkeley 1994), the German translation of Themistius's 'Staatsreden' by Leppin and Portman (Stuttgart 1998), or the English translation of a selection of Themistius's orations by Heather and Moncur in the series *Translated Texts for Historians* (Liverpool 2001). This series now includes Flower's translation of the three bishops' invectives against Constantius II.

Flower is an expert on these invectives. In 2013 he published a monograph entitled *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invectives* with Cambridge University Press. As Flower himself remarks in the preface, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II* should be seen as a counterpart to his 2013 monograph, as it provides translations of the most important texts discussed in that book.

The volume contains a new English translation of Athanasius' *Historia Arianorum*, as well as the first English translations of Hilary of Poitiers' *In Constantium* and Lucifer of Cagliari's *Moriundum esse pro dei filio*. The texts by Hilary and Lucifer are directly addressed to Constantius while Athanasius' *History of the Arians* refers to the emperor in the third person. All three texts were

composed around 360. All three men were victims of decisions by church councils dominated by Arians and were exiled from their sees. And, although they belong to different genres, they each defend the orthodox cause, that is, the creed of Nicaea, and fiercely attack Arianism and its adherents. They are particularly united by “their polemical tone and personal invective that they direct against the emperor” (35).

Constantius is in all three texts portrayed in very strong, polemical, and expressive language: he has a polluted and sacrilegious mind; he is a fool, a persecutor like Nero and Decius; the child of the devil, and a rapacious wolf. He is also presented as the precursor of the Antichrist, a worm of Arius, a sick dog and an inhuman monster, and as a tyrant. The Arians are described in an analogous way: they are more ferocious than wild animals, more savage than Scythians, and they are the new Jews.

The translations of the texts are preceded by an informative Introduction of some forty pages in which Flower succinctly discusses the ecclesiastical politics and the doctrinal issues between Arians and adherents of the Nicene conviction, including the various councils that took place between 318 and 361, and which convicted Athanasius, Hilary and Lucifer. He also briefly introduces each author and their works. Flower concludes his Introduction with some important observations. The three authors exploit recognizable tropes from imperial panegyric and invert them to create an image of an exemplary tyrant. But, instead of using only *exempla* from the Greek and Roman past as was common in the political discourse of the laudatory oration, now biblical exempla, such as Pharaoh, Ahab, and Judas, are also employed. He

notes that these invectives serve not only to present a negative characterization of Constantius and his supporting Arian bishops, but also to create a positive self-image of the authors themselves: they are the true Christians who openly dare to stand up to the emperor and the Arian heretics and, like the martyrs and confessors from before 313, they too are willing to die for the true faith. It is hard to imagine that the emperor was aware of, let alone read, these texts. They may have been published after Constantius’ death and/or circulated only in limited Arian circles.

Of the three texts, the ones by Athanasius and Hilary are the most interesting from a historical perspective since they contain valuable, although one-sided, information about the Arian controversy which dominated ecclesiastical politics in the fourth century. They contain, for instance, information about councils, names of Arian and non-Arian bishops, and about the intervention of the state—the emperor and his apparatus—in ecclesiastical affairs and the extreme violence which could be the consequence of state interference, as demonstrated by the upheaval in Alexandria and Egypt after Athanasius’s third exile in 356. Lucifer’s text contains hardly any historical information and is, in fact, one long indictment of Constantius. It also uses strong polemical and abusive jargon which is rather over the top.

Flower’s translations are excellent precise and readable. They are accompanied by an elaborate annotation of both a referential and an explanatory nature. The volume contains a list of editions and translations of the ancient texts referred to, a bibliography, a glossary of imperial ranks and titles and theological terms, a general index, as well as an

index of passages from Lucifer's non-biblical sources.

This volume is a very welcome addition to the growing number of late antique texts which have become available for a readership not versed in the ancient languages. It will attract those interested in the theological debates and the ecclesiastical politics of the time, but also those who have an interest in the political discourse of church and state.

Women and Modesty in Late Antiquity

KATE WILKINSON

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Pp. ix + 186. ISBN 978-1-107-03027-5.

Reviewed by Kristi Upson-Saia
(Occidental College)

Wilkinson's new monograph holds up the women of the Anicii family as a case study through which to query the nature of modesty in the late antique Roman world. Throughout her study, Wilkinson stresses the performative nature of modesty (rather than modesty conceived as an internal state). Specifically, in chapters 2–4 she focuses readers' attention on the myriad ways in which late ancient women's modesty was constructed and interpreted in their dress, their voice, their comportment, and their relation to and movement through certain spaces. This focus on performativity enables Wilkinson to highlight the self-conscious and strategic calculations women made on a day-to-day basis, stressing their agency in defining the contours of modesty in antiquity.

Wilkinson acknowledges that our sources are limited in that they provide us scant access into these day-to-day choices. She aims to fill these gaps with the help of

comparative ethnographic material. Ethnographic intertexts, she asserts, provide insight into how often and in what ways Roman women were actively engaged in rich yet subtle acts of self-expression, self-formation, and self-conscious performances of modesty. Thick descriptions of women's dress in other contexts, for instance, alert us to the wearer's choices regarding how to arrange their garments, as well as choices regarding the decoration, color, and pattern of clothing. Further, ethnographic sources attune scholars to the varied audiences women keep in mind as they craft their appearance and, in turn, construct their public personae. With this comparative material in mind, we return to late ancient sources able to see the similar choices available to Roman women (at least, to aristocratic women like the Aniciae). For instance, extant material evidence suggests that Romans could change out the decorative hems of their tunics, and women were continually making choices about how to hold, fold, drape, pin or belt the cloth of their mantles (a particularly unwieldy garment). We also read anew ancient men's voluminous advice and urgent recommendations regarding modesty as no longer mere constraints put upon women, but also as revealing the degree of choice women had with respect to complying, negotiating, or rejecting their male mentors' wishes and the significance of their decisions.

Throughout these chapters, Wilkinson insists that we attribute agency to women when they chose to *conform* to the conventions of modesty determined by men, as much as we attribute agency to women who resist or subvert patriarchal social norms. Following Saba Mahmood—whose analytical insights reverberate throughout the