



Verse hagiography between epic and panegyric: Venantius Fortunatus' *Life of St. Martin*

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Venantius Fortunatus' *Life of St. Martin* is a four-book hexametrical paraphrase of Sulpicius Severus' *Life of Martin* and *Dialogues* (end of 4th c.). At the time of Fortunatus, these two influential hagiographical works had been turned into a resounding epic by Paulinus of Périgueux (5th c.). In the wide literature about Martin, Fortunatus' ambitious work has received mixed scholarly appreciation and has been regarded as a beautiful, yet merely ornamental exercise in literature, which failed to convey the dramatic liveliness of Sulpicius' holy man and added little substantial insight into his cult.

My paper aims to combat this view and propose a reappraisal of Fortunatus' *Life of St. Martin* by focusing on its ceremonial and celebratory aspects. In comparison to Severus and Paulinus, Fortunatus redeploys systematically imagery and rhetorical devices of the panegyric genre: his work lends itself to be studied in the light of panegyric epic, not differently from those of Claudian, Sidonius, and Corippus. The extensive panegyric infrastructure of the poem is thoroughly spiritualized and serves as a means of prayer to the saint in the non-narrative sections. Moreover, panegyric intertexts affect the portrayal of miracles, thus shaping form and function of sanctity.

Lorenzo Livorsi graduated in Classical Philology from the University of Pisa and, jointly, from the Scuola Normale Superiore. Currently, he is a PhD candidate in Classics at the University of Bristol.

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