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### BOOK REVIEW

Espejo Jáimez, Gonzalo (ed.) *Jorge de Pisidia. Panegíricos. Estudio preliminar, traducción, notas y comentarios de Gonzalo Espejo Jáimez*. Biblioteca de Textos Bizantinos. Centro de Estudios Bizantinos, Neogriegos y Chipriotas, Granada, 2021.

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## BOOK REVIEW

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The works of George of Pisidia—the “spring of Byzantine poetry” in the words of a recent book—are remarkable compositions and were extremely influential, in both form and content, for the Greek poetry of the following centuries. George’s *Hexaemeron*, more specifically, was used as a didactic example and inspirational model during the Byzantine period and the Renaissance. Despite its relevance, there have been very few critical editions of Pisides’ poetry and hitherto most of it has only been translated into Latin and Italian.

The last edition before Espejo’s, made by Luigi Tartaglia (1988), built upon the work of Agostino Pertusi (1959). It includes all the poetic works of Pisides, seven more texts beyond the original six which Pertusi called the “epic panegyrics”. The new edition and Spanish translation of Espejo Jáimez (2021) focuses on the epic panegyrics, including among these one more text—*In Christi Resurrectionem*—than are contained in Pertusi’s edition, but not the other religious poems and epigrams edited by Tartaglia. Considering this, it is relevant to ask about the value of this new book. Beyond making Pisides’ work more accessible for Spanish readers—certainly a commendable task in its own—is this book a contribution to the field of Byzantine studies? Should it be of interest beyond the Spanish-speaking world?

I consider that this book contributes significantly to our understanding of Pisides’ poetry in various ways. First, many relevant studies were published in the last thirty years. To name but a few examples: the works of J. Haldon, J. Howard-Johnston, C. Zuckerman, and W.E. Kaegi about Heraclius and the seventh century, M. Lauxtermann’s book about Byzantine poetry, and M. Whitby’s work on George of Pisidia and the role of panegyric in Late Antiquity, among many others. Thus, Espejo’s edition updates and expands the editions of Pertusi (1959) and Tartaglia (1988) with the scholarship of the last decades.

Furthermore, the introductory study of Tartaglia’s edition is very brief and general, only forty pages followed by a couple more devoted to the metrics, the manuscripts and the translation. While there are some brief comments about language, style and content in the footnotes, Tartaglia did not include a full commentary for each specific poem. In contrast, the commentary of Espejo Jáimez is massive. While his introductory study takes more than one hundred pages, the text of each poem is preceded by a brief introduction, and accompanied by more than twenty pages of notes. These notes are not just limited to the traditional *apparatus criticus* and *apparatus fontium*. Going beyond that, they offer a detailed line-to-line commentary of each poem. Some of these notes can take more than an entire page, offering some elaborate analysis, in particular regarding aspects of meter, style and rhetoric, but also about factual elements. See for example the analysis about the grammar, rhythm, rhetorical figures and meaning of the verses 188-194 of the *Heracliad* in notes 54, 55 (pp. 485-487) or note 102 (p. 507) about the Persian fire altar.

This substantial commentary reflects the basis of this edition, the doctoral thesis of Espejo Jáimez, a colossal work of erudition with more than eight hundred pages, probably Joaquín Serrano del Pozo, Review of Gonzalo Espejo Jáimez (ed.) *Jorge de Pisidia. Panegíricos. Estudio preliminar, traducción, notas y comentarios de Gonzalo Espejo Jáimez*. Biblioteca de Textos Bizantinos. Centro de Estudios Bizantinos, Neogriegos y Chipriotas, Granada, 2021, *JLARC* 18 (2024) 51-52; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18573/jlarc.131>

one of the most exhaustive and detailed studies ever done on George of Pisidia's poetry. Following this previous work, the new book not only includes a detailed commentary of text, but also some novel interpretations of their content and composition. For example, the author shows that the rhetorical structure of the *Bellum Avaricum* follows a chiasmic pattern, in which the allegory of the trial is the climax at the centre of the text, preceded and followed by images of water and storms, and with images of fields, seeds and agriculture at the beginning and end of the poem. Another example is the reinterpretation of verse 380 of the same composition as an allusion to the Hesiodic myth of Pandora, which illustrates the range and versatility of Pisides' classical knowledge.

There is one negative aspect of the edition: the notes, while offering an almost line-to-line commentary, are located at the end of each poem. As these notes are particularly extensive, each time the readers want to check them they must interrupt their reading of the poems. Considering the nature and extension of the notes, it would have been useful to present them in the same page, as a parallel commentary to the texts.

The book includes, after all the poems, translations and notes, four tables elaborated by Espejo Jáimez with an exhaustive list of all the references to classical and biblical characters in the seven epic panegyrics. As the combined use of classical and biblical references, to a degree never seen before, is one of the distinctive features of Pisides' poetry, these tables are very useful. The index of names at the end of the book is also quite complete.

Finally, I consider that Espejo Jáimez's edition, translation and commentary of George of Pisidia's epic panegyrics not only makes these texts more accessible to many, it also improves our understanding of these compositions, of the seventh century, and Byzantine poetry in general. Therefore, this book is a noteworthy contribution to the field of Late Antique and Byzantine studies.

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