Prudentius is one of the major Latin poets of antiquity. A Christian living and writing in Spain in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, he was thoroughly imbued with the whole tradition of Latin poetry. The Hamartigenia is a didactic poem exploring the origins of evil and how it operates in the world. It is full of echoes and reworkings of earlier poems by Lucretius, Vergil and others, but is also a serious contribution to this important philosophical and theological issue which was a vital concern for the early Church, and has been a perennial difficulty for both theists and atheists. This is a major new study of the Hamartigenia in the context of Prudentius’s work as a whole and is striking for being as seriously interested in its theological as in its literary contribution.

Anthony Dykes is a research fellow in the Department of Classics in the University of Manchester. This is his first book.
READING SIN IN
THE WORLD

The Hamartigenia of Prudentius and the Vocation
of the Responsible Reader

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University of Manchester
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Contents

Acknowledgements vi
Abbreviations, manuals and works of reference viii
Bible texts used xii
Classical texts used xv
Electronic resources xvi
The names of biblical characters xvii
Vocabulary and style xviii

1 Introduction: 'Prudentius counts' 1
2 The world projects human responsibility 39
3 The vocation of the responsible reader: the biblical strategy 102
4 The vocation of the responsible reader: the genre strategy 174
5 Conclusion 245

Appendix A: A note on the title of the Hamartigenia 249
Appendix B: A brief note on the date and circulation of the Vulgate Genesis 252
Bibliography 255
Index 271
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My mother, Anne Barbara Dykes, has always provided a safe haven, and suitable refreshment.
Abbreviations, manuals and works of reference

Abbreviations for the usual classical journals are given as in *L’année philologique*. I have given titles in full when I refer to less familiar journals.

<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Blaise 2</td>
<td><em>Le vocabulaire latin des principaux thèmes liturgiques</em>, A. Blaise, Paris (no date, but accession at Manchester 1970).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCL</td>
<td><em>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</em>, Turnhout, 1954—.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSEL</td>
<td><em>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</em>, Vienna, 1866—.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MGH</td>
<td><em>Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Auctores Antiquissimi</em>, Hanover, 1826–.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Abbreviations, manuals and works of reference

Ortega and Rodríguez


Palla


PG

*Patrologiae Cursus Completus, series Graeca*, ed. J. P. Migne, 1844–.

PL

*Patrologiae Cursus Completus, series Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, 1844–.

Quasten

(The Spanish edition has been used, as having a more extensive and up-to-date bibliography.)

Quasten’s *Patrología* in four volumes:

i: *Patrología hasta el Concilio de Nicea* (trans. and rev. Ignacio Oñatabía, with the collaboration of Pedro Urseolo Farre and Estanislao M. Llopart), Madrid, 1995.


SC

*Sources Chrétiennes*, Lyon, 1941–.

Souter


Stam


ThLL

*Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, Leipzig, 1900–.

Thomson


Vg.

Vulgate Bible text. The actual editions cited will be found in the next section.

VL

Vetus Latina Bible text. The actual editions cited will be found in the next section.

VLH

Vetus Latina Hispana. See next section.
Abbreviations, manuals and works of reference

OTHER MANUALS AND WORKS OF REFERENCE

Bible texts used

This book uses a variety of texts of the Latin Bible. Generally, the editions of the Vetus Latina Institute at Beuron are preferred where they are available, and where the text is at issue. However, the Vetus Latina Hispana is also used, particularly for the book of Genesis, because despite the criticisms of Moreno Hernández (1992), García de la Fuente (1994: 132, note 1) and others, it does conveniently provide the actual usage of the Spanish Fathers. Sabatier is used when later texts are not available.

The Gospels have not so far appeared in the Beuron editions, so the Codex Colbertinus is often used here. English versions by Knox, and the Jerusalem Bible, are occasionally referred to. Knox translates the Clementine Vulgate, with reference to the Greek and Hebrew texts, and uses the numbering and ordering of biblical texts as in the Latin biblical tradition. Abbreviations and publication details are given below. The texts are listed for the most part according to their frequency of occurrence.

**Vetus Latina**

_Vetus Latina. Die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel nach Petrus Sabatier neu gesammelt und herausgegeben von der Erzabtei Beuron:_

xxii: _Genesis_ ed. B. Fischer, Freiburg, 1951–4. I specify whether the Carthage (K) text, Italian (I) text, Spanish (S) text or E text is being quoted.


**Vetus Latina Hispana**

_La Vetus Latina Hispana: Origen, Dependencia, Derivaciones, Valor e Influyó Universal. Reconstrucción, Sistematización y Análisis de Sus Diversos_
Bible texts used


SABATIER

CODEX COLBERTINUS
Quattuor Evangelia ante Hieronymum Latine Translata post editionem Petri Sabatier cum ipso codice denuo editit J. Belsheim, Christianstad, 1888.

WORDSWORTH – WHITE

CLEMENTINE VULGATE

NEO-VULGATE

BENEDICTINE EDITION
Biblia Sacra iuxta Latinam Vulgatam Versionem ad Codicum Fidem Cura et Studio Monachorum Abbatiæ Pontificiae S. Hieronymi in urbe ordinis S. Benedicti edita, Rome, 1926–.
Bible texts used

VETUS TESTAMENTUM AMIATINUM


KNOX


JERUSALEM BIBLE

Classical texts used

I use texts as listed in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae Librorum Inscriptionum ex quibus Exempla Afferuntur* (2nd edn), Leipzig, 1990. The text used for Prudentius is that of Cunningham (CCL). Church Fathers are quoted in texts of standard collections (PL, CSEL etc.), with the volume number marked in each case. All translations of Latin texts, except of Manilius, are my own.
Electronic resources

CETEDOC, CLCLT – 3 (2 vols), Turnhout, 1996.
The names of biblical characters

The texts of Prudentius use the names of characters in the Bible as they are given in the early Latin versions of the Bible, and I have followed this throughout the book. Thus, we have ‘Abessalon’ rather than ‘Absalom’, ‘Loth’ rather than ‘Lot’, ‘Orfa’ rather than ‘Orpah’ and so on.
Vocabulary and style

The Hamartigenia does not need a special language to discuss it. It would, however, be advantageous to clarify certain usages.

**gender/sexuality:** It has become conventional and customary to make a distinction between 'gender' and 'sexuality', by which 'sexuality' refers to physiological and bodily givens, and 'gender' refers to the cultural elaborations of these data. This book does not observe this distinction. Primarily I reject the distinction because the distinction impedes a fruitful reading of the Hamartigenia. The poem insistently projects feminine behaviour by men and, to an extent, masculine behaviour by women as the supreme sign of actual sin.

**hypertexte and hypotexte:** These are categories promoted by Genette in his book *Palimpsestes* which happen to be very useful in discussing the Hamartigenia. By using the idea of the palimpsest one can understand and imagine, in the matter of textual relations, the superimposition of one text on another, in such a way that one can see, on the same parchment, as it were, an earlier text peeping through beneath a new text written upon it. Genette uses the words *hypotexte* and *hypertexte* to distinguish the text beneath from the text above, without affecting to believe there is no rapport between them.

**italics:** Italics are used for foreign words or phrases, usually Latin, which are integrated into English sentences. While these phrases may make allusion to the text of the Hamartigenia, or to other works of Latin literature, they are not direct quotations.

**mala physica/mala moralia:** Normal English usage is not comfortable with the phrase 'physical evil', and prefers to speak in terms of 'natural evil'.

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disasters’. Such a phrase, however, itself involves a *petitio principii* about what ‘nature’/‘natura’ means, and for this reason, I prefer generally to speak of *mala physica*.

**nature/natural:** There is no satisfactorily neutral yet, at the same time, idiomatic way of speaking of what is ‘nature’ and what is ‘natural’ in this poem. Persistently using quotation marks merely evades or postpones the question. ‘Nature’ may be thought initially to denote the physical world and its ‘natural’ behaviour, but in this book I argue that, in Prudentius’s poem, the behaviour of the ‘natural’ world reflects both the ‘natural’ and ‘un-natural’ behaviour of humanity, particularly as such behaviour regards differentiations of sex and sexuality. In his discussion of *phasis* and homosexual behaviour, as it is presented in the novel *Daphnis and Chloe*, Goldhill finds himself constrained to speak of Gnathon’s behaviour as ‘transgressive’ even as he discusses the way in which ‘nature’ and ‘natural’ are ascribed to it. Yet, even so, Goldhill helpfully outlines the problem for anyone discussing nature and sexual behaviour, particularly as the discussion concentrates on Late Antiquity: ‘The description of Gnathon as *phasis paiderastes* … is particularly striking. For the highly charged contemporary debate on whether the category “homosexual”… is transhistorically applicable has focused in particular on distinctions and overlaps between “essentialist” definitions of an unchanging nature or sexual pathology on the one hand and historically specific, cultural formations on the other. The Classical world has been a particularly privileged and, consequently, most fiercely contested area in this debate.’

In a specifically Christian context Brown remarks, ‘bodies … were not [now] destined to melt away in some distant transformation. Far from being a superficial and transitory layer of the person, sexual differences, and the behaviour appropriate to them, were validated for all eternity.’

**s/he; his/her:** Gender-specific rather than gender-neutral pronouns have been used in this book because of the insistence, in the *Hamartigenia*, on gender distinctions.

**surreal/superreal:** An initially attractive shorthand for the freakish and bizarre phenomena the reader finds in this poem would be to call them

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‘surreal’. However, ‘surreal’ is a critical term too loaded with anarchic and left-wing associations to be useful or neutral in the discussion of the *Hamartigenia.* A way out of this dilemma is to use the word ‘superreal’, which, while used of the same artistic movement, was the loser in the lexicographical contest. It will distance us from some intrusive associations. Using ‘superreal’ saves us from a tiresome series of attempts at circumlocution, or an indulgence in specious inventiveness, which could take us through ‘freakish’ and ‘bizarre’ to ‘extreme mannerism’, ‘hard rococo’ and ‘DaDadidactic’. Herbert Read says, ‘When it first became essential to find an English equivalent for the French word, I made an attempt to establish “superrealism”… The very clarity of the term was against it: the public wanted a strange and not too intelligible word for a strange and not too intelligible thing … I propose … to make a distinction between superrealism in general and Surrealism in particular, employing the first word for the tentative and historical manifestations of what has now become a conscious and deliberate artistic principle.’

Transvalorisation: This term, like *hypertexte* and *hypotexte*, is taken from the influential work of Genette and refers to a notable feature of contemporary ‘pratiques hypertextuelles’, namely the rewriting of an inherited story, so that, for instance, now Man Friday becomes the tutor and instructor of Robinson Crusoe (rather than the reverse) in the new versions. Prudentius uses this ‘pratique hypertextuelle’ in the matter of genre. For instance, his rewriting of pastoral emphasizes its negative and terrible aspects, and prompts the reader to re-evaluate the accepted hierarchy of genres. ‘Transvalorisations: … un double mouvement de dévalorisation et de (contre-) valorisation portant sur les mêmes personnages.’

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7 For Trotsky’s involvement with surrealism, cf. Waldberg (1965: 18, 42 and 44).
8 Read (1939: 21–2).