

Zitierhinweis

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Marc Wolterbeek (ed.): 'The Gods Have Faces'

Marc Wolterbeek provides a significant contribution to the study of medieval Latin literature with his Latin-English edition of Hildebert of Lavardin's Biblical epigrams and short poems. Bishop of Le Mans and later archbishop of Tours, Hildebert stands as a pre-eminent figure among the Latin poets of the Loire valley, such as Marbod of Rennes and Baudry of Bourgueil, all trained at the cathedral school of Angers. As a representative of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance, his work is essential for understanding the intellectual climate of the era and the learned network of women and men to whom Hildebert addresses his writings. However, as Wolterbeek notes, Hildebert's corpus has long suffered from a lack of modern editions and frequent misattributions.

While this study provides incisive scholarly criticisms on the textual transmission and authorship questions, Wolterbeek's primary objective is to give English-speaking readers access to Hildebert's poetry through translations with extensive notes and commentary. This is a vital undertaking, given the convoluted editorial history of Hildebert's writings.

Authorship is central to the problem, as the poems often appear anonymously in medieval florilegia, and their ordering and consistency vary widely across manuscripts.

As Wolterbeek explains in the introduction, the editorial history began with partial publications of the poems by Matthias Flacius Illyricus and Jacob Hommey in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, culminating in Antoine Beaugendre's 1708 comprehensive edition. Unfortunately, Beaugendre relied on a florilegium he believed to be Hildebert's original collection, which was later proven by Barthélemy Hauréau to be a posthumous compilation containing many spurious works. This flawed edition was expanded by Jean Jacques Bourassé with additional poems of dubious attribution and eventually formed the basis for volume 171 of the *Patrologia Latina*.

Hauréau (1878, 1882) was the first to critically evaluate these editions, distinguishing legitimate from spurious works and establishing a "starting point" for modern Hildebert studies, despite his subjective approach. Later scholars, including André Wilmart and A. Brian Scott, faulted Hauréau for lacking an overall sense of the corpus and for relying on personal judgement rather than rigorous method. Wilmart introduced a sounder methodology by identifying "nests" of poems - groupings within manuscripts suggesting shared authorship. Building on this, Scott assembled fifty-seven authentic short poems, the *Carmina Minora*. Wolterbeek builds on the foundations laid by Wilmart and Scott, reproducing the text established by Scott (1969, 2001) for the *Carmina Minora*, and that produced by Scott, Deirdre F. Baker, and Arthur George Rigg (1985) for the *Biblical Epigrams*. One of Wolterbeek's most significant departures from Scott is a more inclusive approach to authorship. Whereas Scott was "drastically selective," Wolterbeek argues that many dubious poems should still be considered Hildebert's, albeit cautiously.

Wolterbeek focuses especially on the debate on the ordering and recensions. Scott posited two recensions, α and ϕ , arguing that α preceded ϕ on stylistic grounds. This remains contentious: Öberg reversed the order and considered α spurious, while Orlandi accepted both as Hildebert's but believed ϕ earlier. Wolterbeek notes that Scott's own ordering - largely based on MS Dublin, Trinity College, TCD 184 - can appear aesthetically "random, not to say chaotic" (31). He also observes that although Scott sought a "scientific" approach, he often lapsed into subjective judgement when evidence was lacking.

After reviewing the scholarly tradition on Hildebert, Wolterbeek turns to comment on the Biblical Epigrams. These present fewer attribution issues, as their ordering and manuscript presence are more consistent (51). Despite classical models, Hildebert's epigrams are religious in nature, condensing complex exegetical interpretations into short, dense verses.

Wolterbeek notes their affinity with riddles more than with standard epigrams (52). Their sequence does not follow the Bible, a "disorder" Wilmar and Scott believed original (50). While some scribes attempted to organise them into Old and New Testament themes, such efforts were inconsistent. Wolterbeek suggests the dense verses may have accompanied Hildebert's sermons as mnemonic or illustrative aids.

The final introductory section discusses stylistic and rhetorical features of the *Carmina Minora* (CM), which Wolterbeek sees as largely epigrammatic. These range from school exercises and classical imitations, especially Ovid, to ribald narratives and sexual jokes. Unlike the Biblical epigrams, the CM vary widely, including poems dedicated to female friends such as Cecilia of Caen (CM 46), Adela of Blois (CM 10, 15), and a learned M. (CM 26), praised for her divine poetry - possibly Muriel of Le Ronceray, also known to Baudry of Bourgueil. While some poems were labelled *nugae* in scholarship, Wolterbeek argues that their poetic quality and rhetorical sophistication show them to be mature works rather than juvenilia, differing from scholars like Peter von Moos, who viewed poems such as *On Ganymede* (CM 48) as early. Some poems were so accomplished that they were misattributed to classical authors: for instance, *On the Hermaphrodite* (CM 23) appeared in editions of Petronius, and *On Lucrece* (CM 19) was deemed Ovidian by Otto of Freising.

The Gods Have Faces is a comprehensive effort to rehabilitate and clarify the poetic legacy of Hildebert of Lavardin. The Latin-English edition presents commentary notes on vocabulary and sources. Manuscript lists appear in Appendices I and II, while Appendix III contains selected manuscript illustrations. By providing translations and detailed commentary that navigates centuries of complex scholarship, Wolterbeek makes a strong case for Hildebert's versatility and skill. The book succeeds in presenting Hildebert not just as a religious figure but as a sophisticated poet whose work bridged the gap between sacred exegesis and classical *nugae*, reflecting a cultivated circle of female and male intellectuals. Wolterbeek's willingness to challenge previous "scientific" exclusions in favour of a broader, manuscript-supported corpus provides a more complete, if still debated, picture of this central figure of the twelfth-century Loire valley.